A

REPLY

TO

Mr. J. S. his 3d. APPENDIX,

Containing some

Animadversions

ON THE

BOOK

ENTITULED,

A RATIONAL ACCOUNT of the Grounds of PROTESTANT RELIGION.

By *Ed. Stillingfleet* B.D.

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An Appendix to the Rule of Faith.

To his honoured Friend Mr. *John Tillotson.*

SIR,

AS ſoon as I underſtood your intentions to anſwer Mr. *Serjeant*, I could not but rejoyce on his behalf, as well as on the truths and your own. For I have that real kindneſs for him, that I heartily wiſh him that reaſon and ſcience he pretends to; which I could not but deſpair of his attaining, unleſs he were undeceived in that monſtrous opinion he §. 1.

hath of himſelf and his undertakings. And I knew no perſon more fit then you, to let him underſtand the truth and himſelf together. In which, your performances have been ſo clear and ſatisfactory, that I hope Mr. *Serjeant* inſtead of another letter of directions to his Anſwerer, will write you one of thanks, for the reaſon and kindneſs you have ſhewed him throughout your Book. Unleſs it fares with you, as it hath done with ſome other *Adverſaries* of theirs, that their civility hath been interpreted as an argument of their uncertainty, and their own confidence cried up for a demonſtration. In which ſenſe only I ſhall grant our *Proteſtant* Writers to build on uncertainties, and Mr. *White* and Mr. *Serjeant* to be the great *Demonſtrators* of this age. If their own reaſon had been as *ſevere* as the *cenſures* at *Rome* againſt them, they had ſaved us the labour of any anſwer, and would have found out their own *Sophiſtry* without a confutation. But the leaſt thing we can imagine by their exceſſive confidence, is, that they are deceived themſelves; and therefore it is a part of charity to them as well as juſtice

ſtice to the truth, to let the world
e, that big words are quite another
ing from ſcience, and a ſtrong pre-
mption from a regular demonſtra-
on. As to which, no more need to
ve been ſaid, than what you have al-
ady done, if Mr. *Serjeant* had not
ought it an acceſſion to the glory of
s atchievements, to lead two Pages
my book in triumph after him. I
nfeſs I was ſomewhat ſurpriſed to ſee
perſon who would be noted for his
lour in aſſaulting *Proteſtant* Writers,
eal ſo behind the main bulk and deſign
my Book, and when he had gotten
o ſingle pages by themſelves, fall
on them with as much pomp and
tentation, as if he had attacqu'd the
hole. And this muſt be noiſed abroad
an *Anſwer* to me, by the ſame figure
at his arguments are called demon-
rations, which is by an *Hyperbole* un-
for any, but ſuch *who never flag be-
w the ſphere of Science* in their own
dgements, though they ſeem not to
me near it in others. Yet ſince
r. *Serjeant* is not only pleaſed to
ncern himſelf ſo far as to anſwer that
rt of my Book relating to oral tra-

dition, but in moſt expreſs terms t
p. 236. challenge me to reply to him, he ma
now ſee (aſſoon as I could get any li
berty from greater imployments) ho
ready I am to give him all reaſonabl
ſatisfaction. And in the firſt place
return him thanks for the weapon h
hath made choice of, *viz.* that of *re*
ſon; there being no other, I deſire t
make uſe of in managing this deba
between us: and I hope he will find
much civility towards him through
this diſcourſe, as he expteſſes towar
me in the entrance to his; if that m
be accounted any real civility which
intended meerly out of deſign wi
the greater advantage to diſparage t
cauſe I have undertaken, and yet
no reaſon to repent of. *If in his curſ*
view of two chapters of my Book he h
p. 202. (as he ſaith) *quite loſt me*, he had no ca
to be troubled for it, if he had fou
far more excellent perſons, *ſuch*
Dr. Hammond, *and the Diſſuader, a*
Dr. Pierce *inſtead of me.* But to
ſure he intends not this in honour
any of us, but by way of a comm
reproach to us all, as though *we did*
talk out of nature or things, but wor

and imagination. I could heartily have wiſhed Mr. *S.* would have *cropt ſo much of the victory due to anothers learning and induſtry,* as to have ſhewed me one propoſition in thoſe diſcourſes, *which a rational underſtanding that would be true to it ſelf, could not ſettle or rely on*; but if ſuch inſinuations as theſe muſt paſs for anſwers, I muſt needs ſay, I judge Mr. *S.* equally happy in confuting our grounds, and in demonſtrating his own; in both which, his greateſt ſtrength lies in the *ſelf-evidence* of his bare affirmations. But it ſeems he is willing to reſign the glory of this *Victory to the judicious author of Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis,* or to ſome others for him; and when they have once obtained it, I ſhall not envy them the honour of it. And I ſuppoſe thoſe perſons, whoever they are, may be able by this time, to tell Mr. *S.* it is an eaſier matter to talk of *Victories* than to get them. But if they do no more in the whole, than Mr. *S.* hath done for his ſhare, they will triumph nowhere, but where they conquer, *viz.* in their own fancies and imaginations. Therefore leaving them to their ſilent conqueſts, and as yet, un-

heard of Victories, we come to Mr. *S.* who ſo liberally proclaims his own in the point of oral Tradition. *Which* (in a phraſe ſcarce heard of in our language before) *is the Poſt*, he tells us, *he hath taken upon him to explicate further and defend.* What the *explicating a Poſt* means, I as little underſtand, as I do the force of his demonſtrations; but this, and many other ſuch uncouth forms of ſpeech, up and down in his Book, (which make his ſtyle ſo ſmooth and eaſie) are I ſuppoſe intended for embelliſhments of our tongue, and as helps to *ſure-ſpeaking*, as his whole Book is deſigned for *ſure-footing*.

§. 2. But letting him enjoy the pleaſure and felicity of his own, expreſſions, I come to conſider the matter in debate between us. And his firſt controverſie with me, is, *for oppoſing the infallibility* p. 203. *of oral tradition, to doctrinal infallibility in Pope and Councils.* A controverſie fitter to be debated among themſelves, than between him and me: for is any thing more notorious, than that *Infallibility* is by the far greateſt part of *Romaniſts* attributed to the preſent *Church*

Church in teaching and delivering matters of faith, not by vertue of any oral tradition, but the immediate assistance of the *Holy Ghost*: and that this is made by them the only ground of divine faith? For which Mr. *S.* may if he please, consult his *judicious author of Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*, or any other of their present Writers, except Mr. *White* and *himself*. He need not therefore have been to seek for the meaning of this doctrinal infallibility as opposed to traditionary, if he had not either been ignorant of the opinion of their own Writers, or notoriously dissembled it. For this infallibility is not attributed to the Rulers of the Church, meerly *as Doctors or Scholars*, but as the representative *Church* whose office it is to deliver all matters of faith by way of an infallible testimony to every age, and thereby to afford a sufficient foundation for divine faith. But Mr. *S.* attributes no such infallibility to the representative Church, as teaching the rest, but derives their infallibility from such grounds as are common to all parts of the essential Church. Wherein he apparently opposes himself

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to the whole current of their own authors, whe reſolve all faith into the immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, without which they aſſert there could be no infallibility at all in tradition or any thing elſe; and therefore theſe opinions are as oppoſite to each other as may be. For ſuch an infallibility is not attributed by them to the teachers of the *Church*, meerly *on ſome ſignal occaſions*, as Mr. *S.* ſeems to ſuppoſe, when they are to explain new matters of faith; but it is made by them to be as neceſſary as believing it ſelf, becauſe thereby the only ſure foundation of faith is laid, and therefore it is very evident they make it proper to the Church in all ages: Or elſe in ſome age of the Church men were deſtitute of ſufficient grounds of faith. For they by no means think it a ſufficient foundation for faith, that one age of the Church could not conſpire to deceive another; for this they will tell him at moſt is but a humane faith; but that Chriſt by his promiſe hath aſſured the Church that there ſhall never be wanting in it the infallible aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, whereby they ſhall infalli-

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bly teach & deliver all matters of faith. And if this be not their opinion, let them ſpeak to the contrary, which if they do, I am ſure they muſt retract their moſt elaborate diſcourſes about the reſolution of faith written by the greateſt Artiſts among them. Let Mr. *S.* then judge *who it is that ſtumbles at the Threſhold*: but of this difference among them more afterwards. By this it appears it was not on any miſtake that I remained unſatisfied in the Queſtion I asked, *Whether am I bound to believe what the preſent Church delivers to be Infallible?* to which Mr. *S.* anſwers, *I underſtand him not.* My reply ſhall be only that of a great *Lawyers* in a like caſe, *I cannot help that.* I am ſure my words are intelligible enough; for I take *infallible* there as he takes it himſelf, for *infallibly true*; although I deny not the word to be improperly uſed in reference to things; and that for the reaſon given by him, *becauſe fallibility and infallibility belong to the knowing power, or the perſons that have it, and not to the object.* P. 204. But we are often put to the uſe of that word in a ſenſe we acknowledge improper, meerly

meerly in complyance with our Adversaries, who otherwise are apt to charge us with having only uncertainties and probabilities for our faith, if we do not use the term *infallible* as applyed to the truth of the thing. I am content therefore wherever, in what I have writ, he meets that term so applyed, that he take it only in his own sense, for that which is *certainly true*; for I mean no more by it. And in this sense Mr. *S.* answers affirmatively; and gives this account of it, *not only because the present Church cannot be deceived in what the Church of the former Age believed, but because the Church in no age could conspire against her knowledge to deceive that age immediately following in matter of fact evident in a manner to the whole world.* The Question then is, whether this be a sufficient account for me to believe that to be certainly true, or to be the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, which the present Church delivers? and consequently whether the resolution of faith be barely into oral tradition?

§. 3. Thus we see the clear state of the Question between us. I come therefore

fore to the vindication of thoſe things which I had objected againſt this way of reſolving faith into oral tradition. Three things I eſpecially inſiſted on. 1. That it is inconſiſtent with the pretenſions of the preſent Roman Church. 2. That it hath not been the way owned in all ages of the Chriſtian Church. 3. That it is repugnant to common ſenſe and experience, and that the Church of *Rome* hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former ages. If theſe three be made good, there will be no cauſe to *glory* in this laſt invention to ſupport the ſinking fabrick of that Church. Theſe three then I undertake to defend againſt what Mr. *Serjeant* hath objected againſt them.

1. That it is contrary to the pretenſions of the preſent Roman Church. And if it be ſo, there can be no reaſon for thoſe who are of it, to rely upon it. For if ſo be that Church pretends that the obligation to faith ariſes from a quite different ground from this; how can they who believe that Church infallible, venture their faith upon any other principle than what is publikly owned by

by her? And whoſoever thinks himſelf bound to believe by virtue of an infallible aſſiſtance of the preſent Church, doth thereby ſhew that his obligation doth not depend upon what was delivered by the former ages of the Church. As thoſe who believed the Apoſtles were infallible in their doctrine, could not reſolve their faith into the infallibility of oral tradition, but into that immediate aſſiſtance by which the Apoſtles ſpake; and where there is a belief of a like aſſiſtance, the foundation of faith cannot lie in the indefectibility of tradition, but in that infallible Spirit which they ſuppoſe the Church to be aſſiſted by. For ſuppoſing this oral tradition ſhould fail, and that men might believe that it had actually failed, yet if the former ſuppoſition were true, there was ſufficient ground for faith remaining ſtill. And what aſſurance can any one have that the preſent Church delivers nothing for matter of faith but what hath been derived in every age from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, if ſuch an infallible ſpirit be ſuppoſed in the preſent Church which was in the Apoſtles themſelves?

For

For on the ſame reaſon that thoſe who heard the Apoſtles were not bound to trouble themſelves with the tradition of the former age; no more ought they who believe the preſent Roman Church to have the ſame infallible aſſiſtance. They need not then enquire whether this age knew the meaning of the former, or whether one age could conſpire to deceive another, or whether notwithſtanding both theſe, errours might not come into the Church; it is ſufficient for them that the definitions of the preſent Church are infallible in all matters of faith. Therefore my demand was built on very good reaſon; *How can you aſſure me the preſent Church obliges me to believe nothing but only what, and ſo far as it received from the former Church?* And Mr. *S*'s anſwer is far from being ſatisfactory, *That this appears by her manifeſt practice, never refuſing communion to any man, that could approve himſelf to believe all the former Age did.* For this may be reſolved into a principle far different from this, which is the belief of the infallibility of the preſent Church. For ſuppoſing that, they

they are not bound to enquire themſelves into the reaſons why the tradition could not faile in any age; it is ſufficient for them to believe the Church infallible; and if it be ſo, in propoſing matters of faith, it muſt be ſo in declaring what the belief of the former age was. But my demands go on, *What evidence can you bring to convince me both that the Church alwayes obſerved this rule, and could never be deceived in it?* Which queſtion is built on theſe two Principles which the infallibility of oral tradition ſtands on. 1. That the Church muſt alwayes go upon this ground. 2. That if it did ſo, it is impoſſible ſhe ſhould be deceived. Both which are ſo far from that *ſelf-evidence* which Mr. *Serjeant* ſtill pretends to in this way, that the *Jeſuits* principles ſeem much more rational and conſiſtent, than theſe do. For granting them but that one *Poſtulatum*, that there muſt be an inherent infallibility in the teſtimony of the preſent Church to afford ſufficient foundation for divine faith, all the reſt of their doctrine follows naturally from it. Whereas this new way of reſolving faith is built on

on such suppositions, which no man well in his wits will be ready to grant. For unless it be *self-evident* that the Church did alwayes proceed on this ground, it cannot be *self-evident* that oral tradition is infallible; because the *self-evidence* of this principle depends on this, that in all ages of the Church, the only rule and measure of faith was, what was delivered by oral tradition from the age foregoing. Now if it be possible that matters of faith might be conveyed in wayes quite different from this, what *self-evidence* can there be that the Church must alwayes proceed upon this? Mr. *S.* then, must demonstrate it impossible for matters of faith to be conveyed to posterity in any other way than oral tradition; and not only that the thing is impossible, but that the Church in all ages judged it to be so; or else he can never make it at all evident that the Church alwayes made this her rule of faith. But if either there may be a certain conveyance of the doctrine of faith another way, *viz.* by writing, or that the Church might judge that way more certain, whether it were so or not, either

ther way it will appear far enough from *self-evidence* that she alwayes judged of doctrines of faith, meerly by the tradition of the preceding age. If another way be granted possible, there must be clear demonstration, that the Church notwithstanding this, did never make use of it; for if it did make use of another way of resolving faith in any age of the Church, then in that age of the Church oral tradition was not looked on as the ground of faith; and if so, notwithstanding what ever Mr. *S.* can demonstrate to the contrary, that age might have believed otherwise that the immediately preceding did. For let us but suppose that all necessary doctrines of faith, were betimes recorded in the Church in books universally received by the Christians of the first ages; is it not possible that age which first embraced these books, might deliver them to posterity as the rule of their faith, and so down from one age to another; and doth it not hence follow that the rule of faith is quite different from a meer oral tradition? Let Mr. *S.* then either shew it impossible that the doc-

trine

trines of faith should be written; or that being written, they should be universally received; or that being universally received in one age, they should not be delivered to the next; or being delivered to the next, those books should not be looked on as containing the rule of faith in them; or though they were so, yet that still oral tradition was wholly relyed on as the rule of faith; & then I shall freely grant that Mr. *S.* hath attempted something towards the proof of this new *hypothesy*. But as things now stand it is so far from being *self-evident* that the Church hath alwayes gone upon this principle, that we find it looked on as a great novelty among them in their own Church; and it would be a rare thing for a new invention to have been the use of the Church in all ages; which if it hath not been, the strength of it is thereby taken away.

§. 4. But let us suppose that the Church did proceed upon this principle, *that nothing was to be embraced, but what was derived by tradition from the Apostles*; how doth it thence follow that

nothing could be admitted into th
Church but what was really ſo deriv
from them ? Do we not ſee in th
world at this day, that among tho
who own this principle, contradicto
propoſitions are believed ; and bo
ſides tell us it is on this account, b
cauſe their doctrine was delivered t
the *Apoſtles* ? doth not the *Greek Chur*
profeſs to believe on the account
tradition from the *Apoſtles* as well
the *Latin* ? If that tradition failed
the *Greek Church* which was preſerv
in the *Latin*, either Mr. *S.* muſt
ſtance on his own principles in t
Age which conſpired to deceive t
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while men own tradition they may
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taught them ; and conſequently th
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coming from the *Apoſtles* which w
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can there be in this principle, wh
two parts of the Church may b
own it, and yet believe contradicti
on the account of it ? It is then wo

our enquiring what *self-evidence* this is which Mr. *S.* speaks so much of, which is neither more nor less, *but that men in all ages had eyes, ears, and other senses, also common reason, and as much memory as to remember their own names and frequently inculcated actions*. Which is so very reasonable a *postulatum*, that I suppose none who enjoy any of these will deny it. Let us therefore see how he proceeds upon it. *If you disprove this, I doubt we have lost mankind, the subject we speak of; and till you disprove it, neither I, nor any man in his wits can doubt that this rule depending on testifying, that is sense or experience, can possibly permit men to be deceivable.* Big words indeed: but such as evidence that all men who are in their wits do not constantly see them. For I pray Sir, what doth Mr. *S.* think of the *Greek Church*? had not those in it eyes, ears and other senses, as well as in the *Latin*? Do not they pretend and appeal to what they received from their *Fore-fathers* as well as the *Latins*? It seems then a deception is possible in the case of testifying, and therefore this doth more *than permit men to be deceivable*; for here hath P. 205.

been an actual deception on one side or other. But we need not fear *losing mankind in this*; for the possibility of errour supposeth mankind to continue still; and if we take away that, we may sooner lose it than by the contrary. But what repugnancy can we imagine to humane nature, that men supposing doctrines of faith to come down from *Christ* or his *Apostles*, should yet mistake in judging what those doctrines are? Had not men eyes and ears, and common sense in *Christ* and the *Apostles* times? and yet we see even then the doctrine of *Christ* was mistaken; and is it such a wonder it should be in succeeding ages? Did not the *Nazarenes* mistake in point of circumcision, the *Corinthians* as to the resurrection, and yet the mean time agreed this, that *Christs* doctrine was the rule of faith, or that they ought to believe nothing but what came from him? Did not the disciples themselves err, even while they were with Christ, *and certainly had eyes and ears, and common sense as other men have*, concerning the great articles of Christian faith, *Christs passion, resurrection*, and the *nature*

of his Kingdom? If then such who had the greatest opportunities imaginable, and the highest apprehensions of *Christ*, might so easily mistake in points of such moment, what ground have we to believe that succeeding ages should not be lyable to such misapprehensions? And it was not meerly the want of clear divine revelation which was the cause of their mistakes; for these things were plain enough to persons not possessed with prejudices; but those were so strong as to make them apprehend things quite another way than they ought to do. So it was then, and so it was in succeeding ages; for let Parents teach what they pleased for matters of faith, yet prejudice and lyableness to mistake in Children might easily make them misapprehend either the nature or weight of the doctrines delivered to them. So that letting aside a certain way of recording the matters of faith in the Books of *Scripture*, and these preserved entire in every age, it is an easie matter to conceive how in a short time *Christian Religion* would have been corrupted as much as ever any was in the world.

For when we consider how much notwithstanding *Scripture*, the pride, passion, and interests of men have endeavoured to deface *Christian Religion* in the world, what would not these have done if there had been no such certain rule to judge of it by? Mr. *S.* imagines himself *in repub. Platonis*; but it appears he is still *in fæce Romuli*; he fancies there never were, nor could be any differences among *Christians*; and that all *Christians* made it their whole business to teach their posterity matters of faith, and that they minded nothing in the world but the imprinting them on their minds that they might have them ready for their Children; and that all Parents had equal skill and fidelity in delivering matters of *Religion* to their posterity. Whereas in truth we find in the early ages of the *Christian Church* several differences about matters of faith, and these differences continued to posterity, but all parties still pleading that their doctrine came from the *Apostles*; & it fell out unhappily for Mr. *S.* that those were commonly most grosly deceived who pretended the most to oral tradition from the *Apostles*

still

ſtill we find the grand debate was What came from the *Apoſtles*, and what not? whereas had tradition been ſo infallible a way of conveying, how could this ever have come into debate among them? What, did not they know what their Parents taught them? it ſeems they did not, or their Parents were no more agreed than themſelves; for their differences could never be ended this way. Afterwards came in for many ages ſuch a ſucceſſion of ignorance and barbariſm, that *Chriſtian Religion* was little minded either by Parents or *Children* as it ought to have been; inſtead of that, ſome fopperies and ſuperſtitions were hugely in requeſt, and the men who fomented theſe things were cryed up as great *Saints* and workers of Miracles. So that the miracles of S. *Francis* and S. *Dominick* were as much if not more carefully conveyed from Parents to Children in that age than thoſe of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; and on this account poſterity muſt be equally bound to believe them, and have their perſons in equal veneration. If men at laſt were grown wiſer, it was becauſe they did not believe

lieve Mr. S's. principles, that they ought to receive what was delivered by their Parents; but they began to ſearch and enquire into the writings of former ages, and to examine the opinions and practices of the preſent with thoſe of the primitive Church, and by this means there came a reſtauration of *Learning* and *Religion* together.

§. 5. But though matters of fact be plain and evident in this caſe, yet M. S. will prove it impoſſible there ſhould any errours come into the *Chriſtian Church*; and his main argument is this, *becauſe no age of the Church could conſpire againſt her knowledge to deceive that age immediately following in matter of fact evident in a manner to the whole world.* But before I come more particularly to ſhew the weakneſs of this argument, by manifeſting how errours might come into the Church without ſuch a conſpiracy as this is, I ſhall propound ſome Queries to him. 1. What age of the *Church* he will inſtance in wherein all perſons who were not caſt out of the *Church*, had the ſame apprehenſions

henſions concerning all points of faith? *i. e.* that none among them did believe more things delivered by Chriſt or the *Apoſtles* than others did. I am ſure he can neither inſtance in the age of the *Apoſtles* themſelves, nor in thoſe immediately ſucceeding them; unleſs Mr. *S.* the better to defend his *hypotheſis* will queſtion all written records becauſe they conſiſt of *dead letters*, and *unſenc't characters*, and *wordiſh teſtimonies*. Never conſidering that while he utters this, he writes himſelf; unleſs he imagins there is more of *life*, *ſenſe* and *certainty* in his *books*, than in the *Scriptures* or any other writing whatſoever. 2. Where there were different apprehenſions in one age of the Church, whether there muſt not be different traditions in the next? for as he looks on all Parents as bound to teach their Children, ſo on Children as bound to believe what their Parents teach them. On which ſuppoſition different traditions in the ſucceeding age muſt needs follow different apprehenſions in the precedent. 3. Whether perſons agreeing in the ſubſtance of doctrines may not differ in their ap-

apprehenſions of the neceſſity of them? As for inſtance, all may agree in the article of Chriſts deſcent into hell, but yet may differ in the explication of it, and in the apprehenſion of the neceſsity of it in order to ſalvation. So that we muſt not only in tradition about matters of faith enquire what was delivered, but under what notion it was delivered; whether as an allowable opinion, or a neceſſary point of faith. But if ſeveral perſons, nay multitudes in the Church may have different notions as to the neceſsity of the ſame points, by what means ſhall we diſcern what was delivered as an opinion in the Church, and what as an article of faith? But Mr. *S.* throughout his diſcourſe takes it for granted that there is the ſame neceſsity of believing and delivering all things which concern the Chriſtian doctrine; and ſtill ſuppoſes the ſame *ſacredneſs*, *concern*, *neceſſity*, in delivering all the points in controverſie between the *Romaniſts* and Us, as there was in thoſe main articles of faith, which they and we are agreed in. Which is ſo extravagant a

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ſuppoſition that it is hard to conceive it ſhould ever enter into the head of a perſon pretending to reaſon; but as extravagant as it is, it is that without which his whole fabrick falls to the ground. For ſuppoſe we ſhould grant him that the infinite errors which depend on the belief of the *Chriſtian doctrine* ſhould be of ſo prevalent nature with the world, that it is impoſſible to conceive any one age ſhould neglect the knowing them, or conſpire to deceive the next age about them; yet what is all this to the matters in difference between us? Will Mr. *S.* prove the ſame *ſacredneſs, neceſſity, concern, and miraculouſly atteſtedneſs* (as he phraſes it) in the *Invocation of Saints, Purgatory, Tranſubſtantiation, Supremacy*, &c. as in the believing the death and reſurrection of the Son of God: if he doth not prove this, he doth nothing; for his arguments may hold for doctrines judged univerſally neceſſary, but for no other. Therefore Mr. *S.* hath a new task which he thought not of; which is, to manifeſt that theſe could not be looked on as *opinions*, but were embraced

braced as *neceſſary articles* of *faith*, For unleſs he proves them ſuch, he can neither prove any obligation in Parents to teach them their *Children*, nor in *Children* to believe what their *Parents* taught, but only to hold them in the ſame degree which they did themſelves. When Mr. *S.* will undertake to prove that the whole *Church* from the time of Chriſt did agree in the points in difference between us, as neceſſary articles of faith, I may more eaſily believe that no age could be ignorant of them, or offer to deceive the next about them. But when Mr. *S.* reflects on his frequent conceſſion that there are *private opinions* in the *Church*, diſtinct from *matters of faith*, he muſt remember before he can bring home his grounds to the caſe between their *Church* and ours, that he muſt prove none of the things in debate, were ever entertained as *private opinions*, and that it is impoſſible for that which was a *private opinion* in one age, to become a *matter of faith* in the next.

§. 6. But becauſe this diſtinction of his ruines

ruines his whole demonſtration, I ſhall
firſt propound it in his own terms, and
then ſhew how from thence it follows,
that errors may come into the *Church*,
and be entertained as matters of faith.
His words are, *it being evident, that* p. 203.
we have but two wayes of ordinary know-
ledge, by acts of our ſoul, or operations
in our body; that is by reaſon and expe-
rience; the former of which belongs to
Speculators or Doctors, the ſecond to De-
liverers of what was received, or Teſti-
fiers. And this diſtinction he frequent-
ly admits, not only in the preſent age
of the Church, but in any; for the
ſame reaſon will hold in all. From
hence I propoſe ſeveral *Queries* further
to Mr. *S.* 1. If every one in the *Church*
looked on himſelf as bound to believe
juſt as the precedent age did, whence
came any to have *particular opinions*
of their own? For either the *Church*
had delivered her ſenſe in that caſe or
not; if not, then tradition is no cer-
tain conveyer of the *doctrine* of *Chriſt*;
if ſhe had, then thoſe who vented pri-
vate ſpeculations were *hereticks* in ſo
doing; becauſe they oppoſed that do-
ctrine which the *Church* received from
Chriſt

Christ and his *Apostles*. If Mr. *S.* replies *that private speculations are in such cases where there is no matter of faith at all* he can never be able to help himself by that distinction in the case of his own *Church*; for I demand, whether is it a *matter* of *faith*, that men ought to believe oral tradition infallible? if not, how can men ground their faith upon it? If it be, then either some are meer *speculators* in matters of faith; or all who believe on the account of the *Popes infallibility* are *hereticks* for so doing. 2. If there were *speculators* in former ages as well as this, whether did those men believe their own *speculations* or no? if not, then the *Fathers* were great *Impostors* who vented those *speculations* in the *Church* which they did not believe themselves; And it is plain Mr. *S.* speaks of such opinions which the asserters of, do firmly believe to be true: and if they did, then they look on themselves as bound to believe something which was not founded on the tradition of the *Church*; and consequently did not own *oral tradition*, as the *rule of faith*. So that as many *speculators* as we find in the *Church*,

so

so many *testifiers* we have against the *infallibility* of *oral tradition*. 3. Whether those persons who did themselves believe those opinions to be true, did not think themselves obliged to tell others they ought to believe them; and consequently to deliver these as matters of faith to their children? Let Mr. *S.* shew me any inconsequence in this; but that it unavoidably follows upon his principles that they were bound to teach their Children what themselves received as the doctrine of Christ, and that the obligation is in all respects equal as if they had believed these things on the account of *oral tradition*. 4 If Children be obliged to believe what their Parents teach them for matters of faith, then upon Mr. *S's.* own concessions is not posterity bound to believe something which originally came not from *Christ* or his *Apostles*? For it appears in this case, that the first rise was from a private opinion of some *Doctors* of the *Church*; but they believing these opinions themselves, think themselves obliged to propagate them to others; and by reason of their learning and authority, these opinions may by degrees gain a general accep-

tance in the ruling part of the *Chur*
and all who believe them true, t
they ought to teach them their
dren; and Children they are to believe
what their Parents teach them. Thus
from Mr. *S.s. own principles*, things that
never were delivered by *Christ* or his
Apostles, may come to be received as
matters of faith in the present *Church*.
Thus the intelligent Reader needs no
bodies help but Mr. *S.* to let him un-
derstand how *Invocation of Saints*, *Pur-
gatory*, *Transubstantiation*, *&c.* though
never delivered either by *Christ* or his
Apostles, may yet now be looked on
as articles of *faith*, and yet no age of
the *Church* conspire to deceive ano-
ther. Either then Mr. *S.* must say,
there never were any *private opina-
tors* or *speculators* in the *Church* as di-
stinct from *testifiers*, and then he un-
avoidably contradicts himself; or he
must deny that posterity is bound to
believe what their fore-fathers deli-
vered them as matters of faith; which
destroyes the force of his whole de-
monstration. Perhaps he will an-
swer, *that Children are not bound to be-
lieve what barely their Parents, or a*
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ber number of persons might deliver matters of faith, but what the whole urch of every age delivers. This, ough the only thing to be said in e case, yet is most unreasonable; be-use it runs men upon inextricable dif-culties in the way of their resolving ith. For suppose any Children ught by their Parents what they are believe; Mr. *S.* must say, they are ot bound to believe them presently, ut to enquire whether they agree ith the whole *Church* of that *Age* rst, before they can be obliged to as-nt. Which being an impossible task ther for Children, or men of age find out in the way of oral tradi-on; this way of resolving faith, oth but offer a fairer pretence for nfidelity. For we see how impossi-le it is for Mr. *S.* to make it appear, hat their *Church* is agreed about the ule of faith; for by his own confession, he far greater number as *speculators* ppose the way asserted by him: how uch more difficult then must it needs e to find out what the sense of the hole *essential Church* is in all matters hich Parents may teach their Chil-

dren for doctrines of faith? So that if Chrildren are not bound to believe what their Parents teach them, till they know they teach nothing but what the whole *Church* teaches, it is the moſt compendious way to teach them they are not bound to believe at all. But if this diſtinction be admitted, as Mr. *S.* makes much uſe of it, then it appears how errors may come into the Church at firſt under the notion of *ſpeculations*, and by degrees to be delivered as points of *faith*, by which means thoſe things may be received in the *Church*, for ſuch, which were never delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*, and yet no age conſpire to deceive the next, which was the thing to be ſhewed.

§. 7. This is one way of ſhewing how *errors* may come into the *Church* without one ages conſpiring to deceive the next; but beſides this, there are ſeveral others I might inſiſt upon; but I ſhall mention only two more. 1. Miſinterpreting the ſence of *Scripture*. 2. Suppoſing it in the power of ſome part of the *Church* to oblige the whole

whole in matters of faith. For the *first* we are to consider that no imaginable account can be *given* either of the writing or universal reception of the *books* of the *New Testament*, if they were not designed for the preservation of the doctrine of *Christ*. And although it should be granted possible for the main and fundamental articles of Christian faith (such as the *Apostles Creed* gives a summary account of) to have been preserved by the help of tradition; yet, unless we be extreamly ungrateful, we cannot but acknowledge that *God* hath infinitely better provided for us, in not leaving the grounds of our *Religion* to the meer *breath* of the people, or the care of mothers instructing their *Children*, but hath given us the certain records of all the doctrines and motives of faith preserved inviolably from the first ages of the *Church*. And when the *Church* saw with what care *God* had provided for the means of faith, *oral tradition* was little minded; thence the memory of those other things not recorded in *Scripture* is wholly lost; all the care was imployed in searching, preserving

and delivering these *sacred books* t
posterity. To these the primitiv
Church still appeals; these they plea
for against all adversaries, defendin
their authority, explaining their sens
vindicating them from all corruption
Tradition they rely not on any fu
ther then as a Testimony of the tru
of these records, or to clear the sen
of them from the perverse interpr
tation of those *Hereticks* who preten
ed another kind of tradition th
what was in *Scripture*. And when th
were silenced, all the disputes th
arose in the *Church* concerning matte
of faith, was about the sense of th
books; as is evident by the proce
ings in the case of *Arius* and *Pelagi*
Wherein Tradition was only used
a means to clear the sense of the *Sc*
ptures, but not at all as that which
faith of all was to be resolved in
But when any thing was pleaded fr
tradition for which there was
ground in *Scripture*, it was reje
with the same ease it was offered; a
such persons were plainly told, t
was not the *Churches* way; if they h
plain Scripture with the concurr
se

ſenſe of *Antiquity*, they might produce it and rely upon it. So that the whole uſe of *Tradition* in the primitive *Church* (beſides atteſting the books) was, to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of impoſing ſenſes on *Scripture*, againſt the univerſal ſenſe of the *Church* from the *Apoſtles* times. But as long as men were men, it was not avoidable, but they muſt fall into different apprehenſions of the meaning of the *Scripture*, according to their different judgements, prejudices, learning and education. And ſince they had all this apprehenſion that the *Scripture* contained all doctrines of faith, thence as men judged of the ſenſe of it, they differed in their apprehenſion, concerning matters of faith. And thence errors and miſtakes might eaſily come into the *Church* without one age conſpiring to deceive the next. Nay if it be poſſible for men to rely on tradition without *Scripture*, this may eaſily be done; for by that means they make a new rule of faith not known to the primitive *Church*, and conſequently that very aſſertion is an error in which the former age did not con-

ſpire to deceive the next. And if theſe things be poſſible, M. *S*'s. demonſtration fails him; for hereby a reaſonable account is given how errors may come into a *Church* without one age conſpiring to deceive another. Again, let me enquire of Mr. *S*. whether men may not believe it in the power of the ruling part of the *Church* to oblige the whole to an aſſent to the definitions of it? To ſpeak plainer, is it not poſſible for men to believe the *Pope* and *Council infallible* in their *decrees*? And I hope the *Jeſuits* (as little as Mr. *S*. loves them, or they him) may be a ſufficient evidence of more than the bare poſſibility of this. If they may believe this, doth it not neceſſarily follow that they are bound to believe whatever they declare to be matter of faith? ſuppoſing then that *Tranſubſtantiation*, *Supremacy*, *Invocation* of *Saints*, were but *private opinions* before, but are now defined by *Pope* and *Council*, theſe men cannot but look on themſelves as much obliged to believe them, as if they had been delivered as matters of faith, in every age ſince the *Apoſtles* times. Is it now repugnant to common ſenſe,

that this opinion ſhould be believed or entertained in the *Church?* if not, why may not this opinion be generally received? if it be ſo, doth it not unavoidably follow that the faith of men muſt alter according to the *Churches* definitions? And thus *private opinions* may be believed as *articles of faith*, and *corrupt practices* be eſtabliſhed as *laudable pieces of devotion*, and yet no one age of the *Church* conſpire to deceive another. Thus I hope Mr. *S.* may ſee how far it is from being a *ſelf-evident principle*, *that no error can come into the* Church, *unleſs one age conſpire to deceive the next in a matter of fact evident in a manner to the whole world.* Which is ſo wild an apprehenſion, that I believe the *Jeſuits* cannot entertain themſelves without ſmiles to ſee their *domeſtick adverſaries* expoſe themſelves to contempt with ſo much confidence.

Thus I come to the reaſon I gave why there is no reaſon to believe that this is the preſent ſenſe of the *Roman Church.* My words are, *For I ſee the Roman Church aſſerts, that things may* *§.* 8.

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be de fide *in one age, which were not in another; at leaſt Popes and Councils challenge this; and this is the common doctrine maintained there, and others are looked on as no members of their Church, who aſſert the contrary; but as perſons at leaſt meritoriouſly if not actually excommunicate. Where then ſhall I ſatisfie my ſelf what the ſenſe of your Church is as to this particular? Muſt I believe a very few perſons whom the reſt diſown as heretical and ſeditious? or ought I not rather to take the judgement of the greateſt and moſt approved perſons of that Church? And theſe diſown any ſuch doctrine, but aſſert that the Church may determine things* de fide *which were not before.* In anſwer to this, Mr. *S. begs leave to diſtinguiſh the words* de fide *which may either mean Chriſtian faith or points of faith taught by Chriſt; and then he grants 'tis nonſenſe to ſay they can be in one age, and not in another.* Or de fide *may mean obligatory to be believed. In this latter ſenſe none I think* (ſaith he) *denies things may be* de fide *in one age and not in another; in the former ſenſe none holds it.* Upon which very triumphantly

p. 205.

phantly he concludes, *What's now become of your difficulty? I believe you are in some wonderment, and think I elude it rather then answer it; I shall endeavour to unperplex you.* I must confess it a fault of humane nature to admire things which men understand not; on which account I cannot free my self from some temptation to that he calls *wonderment*; but I am presently cured of it when I endeavour to reduce his distinction to reason. For instead of explaining his terms he should have shewed how any thing can be obligatory to be believed in any age of the *Church*, which was no point of faith taught by *Christ*, which notwithstanding his endeavour to *unperplex me*, is a thing as yet I apprehend not: Because I understand no obligation to faith to arise from any thing but *divine revelation*: and I do not yet believe any thing in *Christian doctrine* to be divinely revealed, but what was delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*. And my *wonderment* must needs be the greater, because I suppose this inconsistent with Mr. *S*'s. principles. For oral tradition doth necessarily imply that

that all points of *faith* were first taught by *Christ*, and conveyed by tradition to us; but if a thing may be *de fide* in this latter sense which was not before, what becomes of resolving faith wholly into *oral tradition*? For *faith* is *resolved* into that from whence the *obligation* to *believe* comes; but here Mr. *S.* confesses that the obligation to believe doth arise from something quite different from *oral tradition*; and therefore faith must be resolved into it. Besides, all the sense I can find in that distinction, is, that men are bound to believe something in one age, which they were not in another; and if so, I shall desire Mr. *S.* to *unperplex me* in this, how every age is bound to believe just as the precedent did, and yet one age be bound to believe more then the precedent. But however, I am much obliged to him for his endeavour to *unperplex me* as he speaks: for really I look on no civilities to be greater than those which are designed for clearing our understandings: so great an adorer am I of true reason and an intelligible Religion. And therefore I perfectly agree with

with him in his saying, *that Christianity aims not to make us beasts, but more perfectly men: and the perfection of our manhood consists in the use of our reasons.* p. 206. From whence he inferrs, that it is reasonable, consequences should be drawn from principles of faith, *which*, he saith, *are of two sorts; first such as need no more but common sense to deduce them; the others are such as need the maxims of some science got by speculation to infer them; and these are Theological conclusions: the former sort*, he tells us, *the Church is necessitated to make use of upon occasion*, i. e. *when any heretick questions those, and* eadem opera, *the whole point of faith it self, of which they were a part; as in the case of the Monothelites, about Christs having two wills.* But all this while, I am far enough from being *unperplexed*: nay by this discourse I see every one who offers to *unperplex* another is not very *clear* himself. For since he makes no *Theological conclusions* to be *de fide*, but only such *consequences as common sence drawes*, I would willingly understand how *common sence* receives a new obligation to faith. For to my ap-

apprehenſion the deducing of conſequences from principles by *common ſenſe*, is not an act of believing, but of knowledge conſequent upon a principle of faith. And the meaning is no more then this, that men when they ſay they believe things, ſhould not contradict themſelves, as certainly they would do, if they deny thoſe *conſequences* which *common ſenſe* draws from them. As in the caſe of the *Monothelites*, for men to aſſert that *Chriſt* had *two natures*, and yet not *two wills*, when the *will* is nothing elſe but the inclination of the *nature* to that *good* which belongs to it. So that there can be no diſtinct obligation to believe ſuch *conſequences* as are drawn by common ſenſe; but every one that believes the *principles* from whence they are drawn, is thereby bound to believe all the conſequences which immediately follow from them. Indeed the *Church*, when people will be ſo unreaſonable to deny ſuch things, may explain her ſenſe of the article of faith in thoſe terms which may beſt prevent diſpute; but this is only to diſcriminate the perſons who truly believe this article from

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uch as do not. Not that any new obligation to faith results from this act of the *Church*: but the better to prevent cavils, she explains her sense of the article it self in more explicite terms. *Which* as he saith, *is only to put the faith out of danger of being equivocated.* P. 207. Which is quite another thing from causing a new obligation to believe. As suppose the *Church* to prevent the growth of the *Socinian doctrine*, should require from men the declaring their belief of the *eternal existence* of the *Son* of *God*; Would this be to bind men to believe some thing which they were not bound to before? no, but only to express their assent to the *Deity* of Christ in the simplest terms; because otherwise they might call him *God* by *office*, and not by *nature*. Now how can any one conceive that any should be first obliged to believe that *Christ* is *God*; and yet receive a new obligation afterwards to believe his *eternal existence*? Thus it is in all *immediate consequences* drawn by *common sense*; in all which the primary obligation to believe the thing it self, extends to the belief of

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it in the moſt clear and leaſt controver-
ted terms, which are not intended t
impoſe on mens faith, but to promot
the *Churches* peace. For neither i
there a new object of faith; for how
can that be which common ſenſ
draws from what is believed already
neither is there any *infallible propo-
nent*, unleſs *common ſenſe* hath uſurp
ed the *Popes* prerogative. But Mr. *S*
offers at a reaſon for this, which i
*that none can have an obligation to be-
lieve what they have not an obligation
to think of; and in ſome age the Gene-
rality of the faithful have no occaſion
nor conſequently obligation to mind, re-
flect, or think on thoſe propoſitions in-
volved in the main ſtock of faith. From
whence*, he ſaith, *it follows, that a thing
may be* de fide *or obligatory to be believed
in one age, and not in another.* But
let Mr. *S.* ſhew how a man can be ob
liged to believe any thing as an articl
of faith, who is not bound to think
of all the immediate conſequences o
it? Becauſe faith is an act of a rea
ſonable nature, which ought to enquir
into the reaſons and conſequences o
things which it doth believe. But
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Mr. S. miſtake lies here, in not diſtinguiſhing the obligation to believe, from the obligation to an explicite declaration of that aſſent. The former comes only from God, and no new obligation can ariſe from any act of the *Church*; but the latter being a thing tending to the *Churches* peace, may be required by it on ſome occaſions; *i.e.* when the doctrine is aſſaulted by *hereticks* as in the time of the *four firſt General Councils*: but ſtill a man is not at all the more obliged to aſſent, but to expreſs his aſſent in order to the *Churches* ſatisfaction.

But Mr. S. ſuppoſes me to enquire, *how the Church can have power to oblige the Generality to belief of ſuch a point.* To which his anſwer is, *ſhe obliges them to believe the main point of faith, by vertue of traditions being a ſelf-evident rule, and theſe implyed points by vertue of their being ſelf-evidently connected with thoſe main and perpetually uſed points, ſo that the vulgar can be rationally and connaturally made capable of this their obligation.* But we are not now enquiring what the obligation to believe the main points of S. 9. p. 208.

faith is, nor whether traditiou be a *ſelf-evident rule*; but how there ſhould be *a new obligation to believe ſomething ſelf-evidently connected with the former points*, is beyond my capacity to underſtand. And they muſt be *vulgar underſtandings* indeed, that can *rationally and connaturally* be made capable of ſuch an obligation. For if it be ſelf-evidently connected with the main points, no one can believe the one, without believing the other: for nothing is *ſelf-evident* but what a man aſſents to at the firſt apprehenſion of it; and if he doth ſo, how comes there a new obligation to believe it? Is it poſſible to believe that any thing conſiſts of *parts*, and not believe that *the whole is greater than any of thoſe parts*? for this is a thing *ſelf-evidently connected* with the nature of the *whole*. But theſe are *ſelf-evident riddles*, as the former were *unintelligible demonſtrations*. And yet though theſe be rare *Theories*, the application of them to the caſe of the *Roman Church* exceeds all the reſt. *Whence*, ſaith he, *the Government of our Church is ſtill juſtified to be ſweet, and according to right nature, and yet forcible and efficacious*

Although

Although I admire many things in Mr. *S*'s. Book, yet I cannot ſay I do any thing more than this paſſage, that *becauſe men are obliged to believe no implyed points, but ſuch as are ſelf-evidently connected with the main ones*, therefore *the Government of the Roman Church is ſweet and according to right nature*, &c. Alas then, how much have we been miſtaken all this while, that have charged her with impoſing hard and unſufferable conditions of communion with her! no, ſhe is ſo gentle and ſweet that ſhe requires nothing *but the main points on the account of a ſelf-evident rule, and implyed points by reaſon of ſelf-evident connexion with the former.* I ſee Mr. *S*. (if he will make good his word) is the only perſon who is ever like to reconcile me with the *Church* of *Rome*: For I aſſure you, I never deſire any better terms of communion with a *Church*, than to have no main points of faith required from me to aſſent to, but what are built on a *ſelf-evident rule*, nor any implyed points but ſuch as are *ſelf-evidently connected* with the former. And no work can be more eaſie, than to convince me up-

on these grounds; for all endeavours of proof are taken away by the things being said to be *self-evident*. For the very offer of proof that they are so, *self-evidently* proves they are not so: For what ever is proved by something beside it self, can never be said without a contradiction to be *self-evident*. But not to tye up Mr. *S.* from his excellent faculty of proving, if Mr. *S.* will prove to me that any of the points in difference between us, as *Transubstantiation*, *Purgatory*, *Supremacy* of the *Roman Church*, *&c.* have any *self-evident connexion* with any main point of faith in the *Apostles Creed*, I solemnly promise him to retract all I have writ against that *Church*; so far shall I bee from needing a new obligation to believe them. But if these be so remote from *self-evidence*, that they are plainly repugnant to sense and reason (witness that self-evident doctrine of Transubstantiation) what then must we think of Mr. *S.*? Surely the least is, that since his being a *Roman Catholick*, his mind is strangely inlightned, so far that those things are *self-evident* to him, which are contradictions to the rest of the world

world. But withal Mr. *S.* acquaints us with another myſterie; which is, *how theſe points deſcended by a kind of tradition*, and yet confeſſes, *they were never thought of or reflected on, by the Generality, till the Church took occaſion to explain them.* Such a *ſilent tradition* doth very ſutably follow the former *ſelf-evident connexion.* For he that can believe *Tranſubſtantiation* to be *ſelf-evident*, no wonder if he believes that to have been delivered by a *conſtant Tradition*, which was never heard of from the *Apoſtles times* to *theſe.*

Now Mr. *S.* is pleaſed to return to me, and draws up a freſh charge againſt me, which is, *that I act like a Politician, and would conquer them by firſt dividing them, and making odius compariſons between two parties of Divines. But to ſhew us how little they differ, he diſtinguiſhes them, as faithful, and as private diſcourſers; in the former notion*, he ſaith, *they all hold the ſame divinely conſtituted Church-Government, and the ſame ſelf-evident rule of faith; but as private diſcourſers he acknowledges they differ in the explication of* §. 10.

their belief. I meddle not here with the *Government* of their *Church*, (which I have elſwhere proved to be far enough from being *divinely conſtituted*) but with the *rule* of *faith*; and the queſtion is, whether the *infallibility* of *oral tradition*, be that *ſelf-evident rule* which that *Church* proceeds on; *Yes*, ſaith Mr. *S. they are all as faithful agreed in it, but as diſcourſers they differ* about it. Which in ſhort is, that all in the *Church* of *Rome*, who are not of his opinion, know not what they ſay; and that they oppoſe that which they do really believe. Which in plain Engliſh is, that they are egregious diſſemblers and prevaricators in *Religion*; that they do intolerably flatter the *Pope* and *preſent Church* with loud declamations for their infallibility, but they do really believe no ſuch thing, but reſolve all into oral tradition. But is not this an excellent agreement among them, when Mr. *White* and his party not only diſown the common doctrine of the infallibility of *Pope* and *Councils*, but diſpute againſt it as pernicious and deſtructive to *Chriſtian faith?* on the other ſide the

far

far greater part of *Romaniſts* ſay, there can be no certainty of faith, unleſs there be an *infallible* divine teſtimony in the *preſent Church*, and this lodged in *Pope* and *Councils*; that thoſe who endeavour to overthrow this, are *dangerous*, *ſeditious*, *heretical* perſons. Accordingly, their Books are cenſured at *Rome*, their opinions diſputed againſt, and their perſons condemned. And yet all this while, we muſt believe that *theſe* ſtick together like two ſmooth Marbles *as faithful*, though they are knocked one againſt another *as diſcourſers*; and that they perfectly agree in the ſame *ſelf-evident rule* of *faith*, when all their quarrels and contentions are about it: and thoſe managed with ſo great heat, that *hereſie* is charged of one ſide, and *Arch-hereſie* and *undermining Religion* on the other. Doth he think we never heard of Mr. *Whites Sonus Succinæ*, nor of that *Chapter* in it, where he ſaith, *that the doctrine of Pope and Councils infallibility tends to overthrow the certainty of Chriſtian faith; and that the propagating ſuch a doctrine is a greater crime then burning Temples, raviſhing the ſacred Virgins on the Altars, tram-*

De fide & Theol. tract. 2. ſect. 21. p. 158.

pling on the body of Christ, or the sending the Turk or Antichrist into Christian Countreys? Or doth he think we can believe that the *Pope* and *Cardinals*, the *Jesuites* and all the *Papists* of forreign Countreys do *as faithful* agree with Mr. *White* in this? It seems not so by the proceedings in the *Court* of *Rome* against him, in which as appears by the censure of the *Inquisition* against him, dated 17. *November* 1661. his doctrine is condemned not only as *false*, *seditious* and *scandalous*, but as *heretical* and *erroneous* in *faith*. And if it were not for this very doctrine he was there censured, why doth Mr. *White* set himself purposely to defend it in his *Tabulæ suffragiales?* If these then do agree *as faithful*, who cannot but envy the excellent harmony of the *Roman Church*, in which men condemn each other for *hereticks*, and yet all believe the same things still? Well Sir, I am in hopes upon the same grounds Mr. *S.* will yield us the same charity too, and tell us that we agree with him *as faithful*, only we differ a little from him as *discoursers*; for I assure you, there is as great reason: the only difference is, we give them not

such

ſuch *ill words* as they do each other. For let Mr. *S.* ſhew us wherein we differ more from him about the *Rule* of *Faith*, than they do among themſelves: For Mr. *White* when he hath ſaid, *that all kind of hereſie doth ariſe from hence that men make the holy Scripture, or a private ſpirit, the rule of faith*; he preſently adds, *it is all one, if one make Councils or Pope any other way than as witneſſes to be the authors of faith. For*, ſaith he, *this is to ſubject the whole Church to that ſlavery, to receive any errour for an article of faith, which they ſhall define, or propoſe* modo illegitimo, i.e. *any other way then as witneſſes of tradition.* Either then we differ from Mr. *S.* only *as diſcourſers*, or he and his Brethren differ from each other more then as ſuch. And ſo any one would think who reads the oppoſitions and arguments againſt each other on this ſubject, particularly Mr. *Whites Tabulæ ſuffragiales.* But let Mr. *White* ſay what he will, Mr. *S.* tells me, *I am not aware how little they differ even as Divines.* The more ſhame for them to have ſuch furious heats and oppoſitions where there is ſo

Ibid.

P. 209.

so little difference. But as little as they differ, Mr. *White* thinks it safer to talk of their unity in *England*, than to try whether they be of his mind at *Rome*, by going thither to clear himself; for he justly fears he should find them differ from him some other way then *as bare discoursers*. Yet let us hear Mr. *S*'s. reason; *for*, saith he, *though some speculators attribute to the Church a power of defining things not held before, yet few will say she hath new revelations or new articles of faith.* But we know the temper of these men better then to rely on what they barely say. For they say what they think most for their purpose; and one of Mr. *Whites* adversaries, (if himself may be credited) plainly told him, *the doctrine of the Popes infallibility were not true, yet it ought to be defended because it was for the interest of the Church of* Rome: for which he is sufficiently rebuked by him. It is one thing to what they say, and another what necessarily follows from the doctrine which they assert. But for plain dealing commend me to the *Canonists*, who say expressly, the *Church* (by which they

Tabul. suffrag. p. 318.

they mean the *Pope*) may make *new articles* of *faith*: and this is the ſenſe of the reſt, though they are loth to ſpeak out. Elſe Mr. *White* was much too blame in ſpending ſo much time in proving the contrary. But what man of common ſenſe can imagine that theſe men can mean otherwiſe, who aſſert ſuch an infallibility in *Pope* and *Councils*, as to oblige men under pain of eternal damnation to believe thoſe things which they were not obliged to, before ſuch a definition? And what can this be elſe but to make new articles of faith? For an article of faith ſuppoſes a neceſſary obligation to believe it: now if ſome doctrine may become thus obligatory by virtue of the *Churches* definition which was not ſo before, that becomes thereby an article of faith which it was not before. But theſe ſubtle men have not yet learnt to diſtinguiſh a *new doctrine* from a *new article of faith*: they do not indeed pretend that their doctrine is new, becauſe they deny any ſuch thing as new revelation in the *Church*; but yet they muſt needs ſay, if they underſtand themſelves, that old implicit

plicit doctrines, may become new articles of faith by virtue of the *Churches* definition. So little are they relieved by that ſilly diſtinction *of explicit and implicit delivery* of them, which Mr. *S.* for a great novelty acquaints us with. For what is only *implicitly delivered*, is no article of faith at all: for that can be no article of faith, which men are not bound to believe; now there are none will ſay that men are bound to believe under pain of damnation if they do not the things which are only implicitly delivered; but this they ſay with great confidence of all things defined by the *Church*. And let now any intelligent perſon judge; whether thoſe who aſſert ſuch things, do not differ wide enough from thoſe who reſolve all into *oral tradition*, and make the obligation to faith wholly dependent upon the conſtant tradition of any doctrine from age to age ever ſince the *Apoſtles* times.

§. 11. But Mr. *S.* is yet further diſpleaſed with me for ſaying, *that Pope and Councils challenge a power to make things de fide in one age, which were not in another*

another. For 1. he ſays *I ſpeak it in common, and prove it not.* 2. He adds, *That take them right, this is both perfectly innocent, and unavoidably neceſſary to a Church.* And is it not ſtrange he ſhould expect any particular proofs of ſo innocent and neceſſary a thing to the being of a *Church?* But he will tell me it is in his own ſenſe of *de fide*, which I have already ſhewn to ſignifie nothing to his purpoſe. Let him therefore ſpeak out whether he doth believe any ſuch thing as inherent infallibility in the definitions of *Pope* and *Councils?* if not, I am ſure at *Rome* they will never believe that Mr. *S.* agrees with them *as faithful*; if he doth, whether doth not ſuch an infallible definition bind men by virtue of it to the belief of what is then defined? if it doth, then things may become as much *de fide* by it, as if they were delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*. For thereby is ſuppoſed an equal obligation to faith, becauſe there is a propoſition equally infallible. But will he ſay, the *Pope* doth not challenge this? Why then is the contrary doctrine cenſured and condemned at *Rome?*

Rome ? Why is the other ſo eagerly contended for, by the moſt zealous ſons of that *Church*, and that not as a *ſchool-opinion*, but as the only certain *foundation* of *faith* ? Mr. *S.* is yet pleaſed to inform me further, *that nothing will avail me but this, if a Pope and Council ſhould define a new thing, and declare they ground themſelves on new lights, as did their firſt reformers in* England: *but I ſhall find*, he ſaith, *no ſuch fopperies in faith-definitions made by the Catholick Church.* Is this the man who made choice of reaſon for his weapon ? could there be a greater calumny caſt on our *Church*, than to ſay *her reformers grounded themſelves on new lights* : when our great charge againſt the *Church* of *Rome* is for introducing *Novelties*, and receding from pure and primitive antiquity. Whether the charge be true or no, yet ſure it follows they did not declare *they ground themſelves on new lights*, but expreſly the contrary. Well, *but Pope and Councils neither define new things, nor ground themſelves on them* : but what means the man of reaſon ? that they make no new definitions : ſurely not,

ot; for then what did they meet for? nd what mean their decrees? but he tends, that they deliver no new doctrine: but how must that be tryed? hath Mr. *S.* gained the opinion of fallibility both from *Pope* and *Councils*, that we must believe his bare ord? but we not only say but prove hat even their last *Council* hath defined many things, which never were elivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*. nd it is to no purpose whether they y *they ground themselves on new lights*, r pretend to an *infallible assistance*; or it comes all to the same at last. For f the assistance be infallible, what matter is it whether the doctrine hath been evealed or no? for on this supposition it is impossible that *Pope* and *Council* hould miscarry. Therefore if any *Church* be guilty of *fopperies* in faith-definitions, it must be that which you miscall *the Catholick*, but is more truly known by the name of the *Roman Church*. There is yet one piece of Mr. *S's.* sagacity to be taken notice of as to this particular, which is, *that I am at an end of my argument, because I say the opinion of the Pope and Councils* p. 210.

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infallibility is the common doctrine maintained: in which I confound the Church with the ſchools, or ſome private opinaters, and then carp at thoſe mens tenets. And this is the force of all that Paragraph. He tells me, *I want not wit to know that no ſober Catholick holds humane deductions the rule of their faith, ſchoolmen definers of it, nor the ſchools the Tribunal whence to propoſe it authoritatively and obligingly to the generality of the faithful.* Neither doth Mr. *S.* want the wit to know that our preſent enquiry is concerning the ſenſe of their preſent Church about the rule of faith. Since then Mr. *S.* muſt confeſs it neceſſary to faith to know what the certain rule of it is; let me enquire further, whether any particular perſon can know certainly what it is, unleſs he know what the *Church* owns for her rule of faith; and whether that may be owned as the *Churches* judgement, which is ſtiffly oppoſed by the moſt intereſted perſons in the *Roman Church*, and the moſt zealous contenders for it? Eſpecially when the *Pope* who is ſaid to be *Head* of the *Church*, condemns the do-

ctrine

ctrine asserted, and that only by a small number of such who are as much opposed by themselves, as by any of us. Is it then possible to know the *Churches* judgement or not? if not, tis to no purpose to search for a *rule* of *faith*: if it be, which way can we come to know it, either by most *voices* or the sense of the *Governours* of the *Church*; either of the wayes, I dare put it to a fair tryall whether *oral tradition*, or the *infallibility* of *Pope* and *Councils* be the doctrine most owned in the *Church* of *Rome*? But Mr. *S.* still tells us, *these are only private opinators and schoolmen who assert the contrary doctrine to his.* But will not they much more say on the other side, that this way of *oral tradition* is a novel fancy of some few *half-Catholicks* in *England*, and tends to subvert the *Roman Church.* But is the present *Pope* with Mr. *S. a private opinator*, or was the last a *meer schoolman*? I am sure what ever Mr. *S.* thinks of him he thought not so of himself, when he said, *he was no Divine* in the controversie of *Jansenius.* Doth the *Court* of *Rome* signifie no more with Mr. *S.* then

a company of *ſcholaſtick Pedants*, that know not what the ſenſe of the *Church* is, concerning the rule of faith? I meddle not with the *Schools* but with the authority of the *preſent Church*, and him whom Mr. *S.* owns for the *head* of it: and is it conſiſtent with his *headſhip* to condemn that doctrine which contains in it the only certain *rule* of *faith*? Mr. *S.* may then ſee they were no ſuch impertinent *Topicks* which I inſiſted on, and as ſtout as Mr. *S.* ſeems to be, I am apt to believe he would not look on the cenſure of the *Inquiſition* as an impertinent *Topick*.

§. 12. But at laſt Mr. *S.* offers at ſomething whereby he would ſatisfie me of the ſenſe of the *Church*, as to this particular, and therefore asks, *whether I never heard of ſuch a thing as the* p. 211. *Council of* Trent? I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs I have; and ſeen more a great deal of it, then I am ſatisfied with. But what of that? *there*, he tells me, *I may find a clear ſolution of my doubt by the conſtant procedure of that moſt grave Synod in its definitions.* That is,

is, I hope to find that oral Tradition was acknowledged there as the only *self-evident* rule of faith: if I do this, I confeſs my ſelf ſatisfied in this enquiry. But how much to the contrary is there very obvious in the proceedings of it? For in the 4. *Seſſion* the Decree is, *That Scripture and tradition ſhould be embraced with equal piety and reverence; and the reaſon is, becauſe the doctrine of faith is contained, partly in Scripture, partly in tradition*; but what arts muſt Mr. *S.* uſe to inferr from hence, that *oral tradition* in contradiſtinction to *Scripture* was looked on as the only rule of faith? I cannot but ſay that the ruling men of that *Council* were men wiſe enough in their *Generation*; and they were too wiſe wholly to exclude *Scripture*; but becauſe they knew *that* of it ſelf could not ſerve their purpoſes, they therefore help it out with *tradition*, and make both together the *compleat rule of faith*. Where I pray in all the proceedings of that *Council* doth Mr. *S.* find them define any thing on the account of *oral tradition*? inſtead of which we find continual bandyings

about the ſenſe of *Scripture* and *Fathers*, which might have been all ſpared if they had been ſo wiſe as to conſider they could not but know the ſenſe of the *preſent Church*, nor that of the precedent, and ſo up to the time of *Chriſt*. But they were either ſo ignorant as not to light on this happy invention, or ſo wiſe and knowing as to deſpiſe it. It is true they would not have their doctrines looked on as *Novelties*, therefore they ſpeak much of *tradition* and the *ancient faith*; but that was not by what their *Parents* taught them, but what the *Fathers* of the *Church* delivered in their writings; for by theſe they judged of *traditions*, and not the *oral* way. And therefore I ſee little reaſon to believe, that this was either the ſenſe of the *Council* of *Trent*, or is the ſenſe of any number of *Roman Catholicks*, much leſs *of the whole* p. 212. *Church none excepted* as Mr. *S.* in his confident way expreſſes it. *And if he will*, as he ſaith, *diſavow the maintaining any point, or affecting any way which is not aſſented to by all*, I hope to ſee Mr. *S.* retract this opinion, and either fall in with the *Court* of *Rome*,

or return as reaſon leads him into the boſom of the *Church* of *England*. But there ſeems to be ſomewhat more in what follows, viz. *that though ſchoolmen queſtion the perſonal infallibility of the Pope, or of the Roman Clergy, nay of a General Council, yet all affirm the infallibility of tradition, or the living voice of the Church eſſential; and this*, he ſaith, *is held by all, held firmly*, and *that it is abſolutely infallible*. To this therefore I anſwer; either Mr. *S.* means that none do affirm that the *univerſal tradition* of the *Church eſſential* can erre; or that the *Church* of *Rome* being the *Church eſſential* cannot erre in her tradition: But which way ſoever he takes it, I ſhall eaſily ſhew how far it is from proving that he deſigns it for. For if he take it in the firſt ſenſe, *viz.* that *all* the *faithful* in *all ages* could not concur in an error, then he may as well prove *Proteſtants* of his mind as *Papiſts*, for this is the foundation on which we believe the particular books of *Scripture*. If this therefore proves any thing, it proves more then he intends, *viz.* that while we thus oppoſe each other, we do perfectly

fectly agree together; and truly so we do, as much as they do among themselves. But if Mr. *S*'s. meaning be, *that all of their Religion own the Roman Church to be the Church essential, and on that account, that it cannot erre* (setting aside the absurdity of the opinion itself) I say from hence it doth not follow, that they make *oral tradition* the rule of *faith*, because it is most evident that the ground why they say their *Church* cannot erre, is not on Mr. *S*'s. *principles*, but on the supposition of an *infallible assistance* which preserves that *Church* from error. So that this falls far short of proving that they are all agreed in this rule of faith; which is a thing so far from probability, that he might by the same argument prove that *Scripture* is owned by them all to be the rule of faith. For I hope *it is held by all*, and *held firmly* that the living voice of *God* in *Scripture* as delivered to us is *infallible*; and if so, then there is as much ground for this as the other. But if we enquire what it is men make a *rule* of *faith*, we must know not only that they believe *tradition infallible*, but on what account they

do

do ſo. For if tradition be believed *infallible* barely on the account of a promiſe of *infallibility* to the *preſent Church*, then the reſolution of faith is not into the *tradition*, but into that *infallible aſſiſtance*; and conſequently the rule of faith is not, what bare tradition delivers, but what that *Church* which cannot erre in judging tradition doth propoſe to us. It is not therefore their being agreed in *General that tradition is infallible* doth make them agree in the ſame *rule* of *faith*; but they muſt agree in the ground of that *infallibility*, viz. that it depends on this, *that no age could conſpire to deceive the next.* But all perſons who underſtand any thing of the *Roman Church*, know very well that the general reaſon why tradition is believed infallible is, becauſe they firſt believe the *Church* to be *infallible*; whereas Mr. *S.* goes the contrary way, and makes the *infallibility* of the *Church*, to depend on the *infallibility* of *Tradition.* And therefore for all that I can ſee we muſt ſtill oppoſe *private opinators* in this controverſie; the *Church* of *Rome*, not having declared her ſelf at all

on Mr. *S*'s behalf, but the contrary: and the generality believing on the account of the preſent *Churches* infallibility. And it is ſtrange Mr. *S.* ſhould find no difference between mens reſolving faith into common ſenſe, and into the immediate aſſiſtance of the *Holy Ghoſt*. If this then *be the*
p. 213. *firſt principle of controverſie*, as Mr. *S.* pretends, we ſee how unlikely they are to agree about other matters, who are ſo much divided about the principle of reſolving them. And if this be the ground of faith, then moſt *Romaniſts* build on a wrong Foundation. But if the *infallibility of oral tradition*, be the foundation on which *that formidable ſtructure is erecting*, which he ſpeaks of; woe then to the *Court* of *Rome*, for that is known to build on quite a different foundation. And *if this*, as he ſaith, *riſes apace, and has advanced many ſtories in a ſmall time*, it only lets us know how faſt their diviſions grow, and that they are building ſo faſt one againſt another, that their *Church* will not ſtand between them. By this diſcourſe, Mr. *S.* pretends *to anſwer all thoſe If's which follow*;

low; which are theſe, *In caſe the Church may determine things* de fide *which were not before, whether the preſent Church doth then believe as the precedent did or no? if it did, how comes any thing to be* de fide *which was not before? if it did not, what aſſurance can I have that every age of the Church believes juſt as the precedent did and no otherwiſe? When I ſee they profeſs the contrary. And if a thing may be* de fide *in one age which was not in aforegoing, then a Church may deliver that as a matter of faith at one time, which was never accounted ſo before: by which means the preſent Church may oblige me to believe that as a matter of faith, which never was ſo in Chriſts or the Apoſtles times, and ſo the infallibility on the account of tradition is deſtroyed.* To all which Mr. *S.* gives a very eaſie anſwer: viz. *that they do not hold any diſparate or unimplyed points of faith; but ſuch as are involved and implyed in the main point.* This is more eaſily ſaid then underſtood: for if theſe be implyed in the former, how can there come a new obligation to believe them? For to take his own Inſtance,

will

will any man in his ſenſes ſay, *that he that believes, homo eſt animal rationale*, doth not believe *homo eſt animal?* and this he makes choice of as an example *how one point of faith may be involved in another ſo as to receive a diſtinct obligation to believe it.* I grant that *homo eſt animal* is involved in the other, but he that ſhall ſay, that after he hath aſſented to that propoſition, *homo eſt animal rationale*, he may be capable of a new obligation to believe the former which is involved in this, it may be juſtly queſtioned whether ſuch a one as to himſelf can truly ſay, *homo eſt animal rationale* or no. But after ſuch rare ſubtilties, he doth very well to tell me, *that I ought to conſider what Logick tells us, that the concluſion is in the premiſes, which reflection* (in his courtlike expreſſion) he ſaith *will much unblunder my thoughts.* But let the concluſion be as long as it will in the *premiſes*, will any man in his wits ſay, that he that believes the *truth* of the *premiſes* is not thereby bound to believe the concluſion? and the more the one is involved in the other, the leſs is it

p. 214.

poſſible

possible to make the obligation to believe them distinct. And it is hard for me to believe, that this is a way *to unblunder my thoughts*, when I see what horrible confusion such expressions argue in his own. Let the *Church* then clear her thoughts never so much, yet all this cannot amount to a distinct obligation to believe those things which were involved before, but to a more explicit declaring them for the *Churches* peace and satisfaction. The only conclusion then involved in these premises is, that if some things may be *de fide* in one age which were not in another, then the present age may believe otherwise then the precedent did. And if this doctrine be held in the *Church* of *Rome*, nothing can be more evident, then that Mr. *S*'s. *first principle of controversie*, is far from being the doctrine of the *Roman Church:* which was the thing to be proved.

My second chief argument against this way of *oral tradition* was, *that it had not been owned in all ages of the Christian Church*; to manifest which, I enquired into the reason of the obligation §. 13.

gation in any age of the *Church* to believe and practiſe juſt as the precedent did. Mr. *S.* rejoyces in that confeſſion of mine, *that the only thing to be proved in this caſe is, that every age of the Church and all perſons in it looked on themſelves as obliged not to vary in any thing from the doctrine and practiſe of the precedent age.* And I there offer the choice of three wayes to prove it, *reaſon, teſtimony* or *tradition*; he tells me, *he accepts the way of reaſon*; yet quarrels with me for preſſing for a *demonſtrative medium* to prove it, when yet Mr. *S.* ſeldome ſpeaks under the rate of *demonſtrations*. But he thereby notes *the unconſonancy of my carriage*; Wherein I wonder? that I ſhould deſire them to perform their promiſe, *viz.* to give us *demonſtrations* for the grounds of faith? But he ſaith withal, *he will yield me the honour of profeſſing I have no demonſtration but probability for the ground of mine, and he makes this ſerious proteſtation for himſelf, that he ſhould eſteem himſelf very diſhoneſt, did he aſſert and preſs on others any argument for the ground of his faith which he judged not evident, that is de-*

p. 216.

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monſtrative. What is it theſe men mean, when they cry up their own way for *demonſtrative*, and ſay that we build our faith meerly on *probabilities*? Do they ſay that *Religion* is capable of ſtrict and rigorous *demonſtration*? If ſo, let them demonſtrate the *Being* of *God* and *Immortality* of the *ſoul* with as much evidence, as *that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles*. And it is ſtrange if they think *particular problems* in religion are more capable of *demonſtration* then thoſe *Theorems* in which they are built. But by all the enquiry I can make, all the difference between us is, that Mr. *S*. will have that called a *demonſtration*, which is ſcarce a *probability*, and we call that *ſufficient reaſon*, which any wiſe man may ſafely rely on in matters of *religion*. In the mean time how much do we ſuffer by our modeſty, that becauſe we ſpeak not as big as Mr. *S*. does, we muſt be cenſured preſently to have nothing but *probabilities* for our faith? Are thoſe bare *probabilities* which leave no ſuſpicion of doubt behind them? and ſuch we freely aſſert the grounds of our religion to do; *i. e.* I aſſert that we

we have the higheſt actual certainty o
the truth of our *Religion* which th
mind of any reaſonable man can deſire
and if Mr. *S*'s. *demonſtrations* can d
any more then this, let him tell u
what it is. For my part I know no
thing higher in the mind of man the
a *certain aſſent*, and if I did not think
there was the greateſt ground in *Reli*
gion for that, I abhorr diſſimulation ſo
much that I ſhould leave off perſwadin
men to embrace it. And if any me
have made us ſhye of the word *demon*
ſtration and *infallibility*, they are ſuch
men as Mr. *S*. have done it, who tal
of theſe things when their argument
fall beneath ſome of the remoteſt *pro*
babilities we inſiſt on. Nay if there b
any force in his *demonſtration* as t
matters of fact, it hath been uſed by u
long before his book ſaw the ligh
But we love to give the true names t
things, and not to loſe our credit wi
all intelligent perſons, by playi
Mountebanks. in *Religion*, crying u
thoſe things for *infallible cures* whi
an ordinary capacity may diſcern th
inſufficiency of. But was it any thi
but juſtice and reaſon in me to expo

nd call for a *demonſtration* from them
ho talk of nothing under it? And
herefore I ſaid, *that it was impoſſible*
demonſtrate this way of oral traditi-
n, unleſs it were proved impoſſible for
en not to think themſelves obliged to
elieve and do all juſt as their prede-
eſſors did. For where the contrary is
ot only poſſible, but eaſily ſuppoſable,
s that men may believe thoſe things as
ew articles of faith which are defined
y *Pope* and *Council*, I wonder how
lr. *S.* will demonſtrate that men muſt
ook on themſelves as obliged to be-
eve juſt as their predeceſſors did?
or I had thought demonſtrations had
ever place in contingent propoſiti-
ns; but it ſeems Mr. *S.* who tells me,
ogick will unblunder my thoughts, in-
ends to make a new one for me. And
aſſure you ſo he had need, before I
hall ever call his arguments demon-
rations: and although he thinks him-
lf *very honeſt* in calling them ſo, yet
ſhould think him much *wiſer* if he
id not.

But before I come to the particular §. 14.
ebate of theſe things, I freely tell
him,

him, that I grant all he requeſts; I
p. 236. ſhall *take along with me the nature of the matter in hand, the doctrines and practiſes ſpoken of, the manner of delivering them, the neceſſary circumſtances which give weight to both*; yet for all theſe, I cannot look on his way as *demonſtrative*. And that both our meanings may be better underſtood, it is very neceſſary the Reader ſhould have a true account of the ſtate of the Queſtion between us. And if he will believe me, I never intended to diſpute with him or any one elſe, *whether men were bound to wear their clothes, or build*
p. 217. *houſes, or manage eſtates juſt as their predeceſſors did*, but whether every age is obliged to believe and practiſe juſt as the precedent did by vertue of meer *oral tradition*; for about that is all the controverſie between us. I do not deny but that a ſucceeding age may look on it ſelf as bound to believe what the precedent did; but whether that obligation doth ariſe purely from the delivery of that doctrine by the precedent in the way of *tradition*, is the thing in diſpute between us. For in caſe the ground of

faith

faith be wholly the written word conveyed from age to age, I deny not but an obligation to believe descends with the doctrine to every succeeding age. But that which Mr. *S.* is to prove is, *that abstractly from Scripture every age is absolutely bound to believe just as the precedent did*, without any enquiry whether that doctrine doth agree with *Scriptures* or no, but that he is therefore bound to believe all which is proposed to him, because it was the doctrine of the immediately preceding age. And this is that which I deny, and desire Mr. *S.* to prove For which he first gives us a large instance in historical matters, and then comes to the matters of *Christian faith*. His Instance is, *in Alexanders conquest of* Asia, *as to which* he saith, *that the memory of it is fresh and lively, though some thousand years since. And that the universal and strong perswasion of this matter of fact was not caused by Books, as* Curtius *his History, but by humane tradition: that the continuance of this perswasion was the notoriety of the fact to the then livers which obliged them to relate it to their posterity, and that this testifying* p. 218.

ly the fore-fathers was that which obliged posterity to believe things as true, because there could be no imaginable motive why the whole world should conspire to deceive them, or be deceivable in their sensations: on which principle it passed to the next age, and so came down by way of tradition to our dayes: and the obligation to believe in every age depended upon this that the senses of the first could not be deceived; and having this security in every age that no one would conspire to deceive the next; it follows that no age could say a former age testified so, unless it did so; therefore, saith he, *it follows demonstratively that it was testified; and so the descendents in every age to the very end of the world have the same obligation to believe their immediate fore-fathers saying it was testified by theirs, and so to the very first who were witnesses of his actions.* This is the substance of what he more largely discourses in several Paragraphs; which when he hath done, he tells me, *he expects what I will reply to this discourse.* p. 123. Not to frustrate therefore his expectation, and in order to the Readers satisfaction, we are to consider

that

that in the present case there are two distinct questions to be resolved. 1. How a *matter of fact* evident to the world comes to be conveyed to posterity? 2. By what means a compleat history of all passages relating to it may be conveyed? As to the first, I grant that a *fact* so notorious as *Alexanders* conquest of *Asia* might have been preserved by humane tradition, and conveyed in a certain way from one age to another. But if we enquire into that which is alone proper to our Question, *viz.* by what means we may judge what is *true* and *false* as to the *particulars* of that *conquest*, then I deny that bare *tradition* is to be relyed on in this case. For the certainty of conveyance of all particulars doth depend not upon the *bare veracity*, but the *capacity* and *skill* of *communicating* from one age to another. For which one would think we need no clearer evidence then the considerations of the different account of former *times* in the several Nations of the world. For who can imagine, but the *barbarous Nations* were as unwilling to deceive their posterity as any other? yet we

ſee a vaſt difference in the *hiſtories* of former *ages* among them, and more civilized people. And I wiſh Mr. *S.* would rather have inſtanced in ſome hiſtory which had been preſerved meerly by tradition and not in ſuch a one, which, if any other, hath been moſt carefully recorded and propagated to poſterity. If Mr. *S.* would have undertaken to have told us who they were that firſt peopled *America*, and from what place they came by the *tradition* of the preſent inhabitants, and what famous actions had been done there in former ages, we might have thought indeed that *ſole tradition* had been a very ſafe way to convey matters of fact from one age to another. But ſince all Mr. *S*'s. arguments will hold as well for the *Scythians* and *Americans* and the moſt barbarous Nations, as the moſt civil and polite; what reaſon can Mr. *S.* give why there is not among them as certain an account of former ages, as among the *Greeks* and *Romans*? Were not their *ſenſes*, who ſaw thoſe matters of fact, as uncapable of being *deceived* as others? was not every age amon

among them as unwilling to deceive their posterity as elsewhere? yet notwithstanding the force of Mr. *Ss.* demonstration, we see for want of *letters* how grosly ignorant they are of what was done before them. And if this principle were true, why have we not as true an account of the *eldest* ages of the world, as of any other? Nay, why were *letters* invented, and writing ever used, if tradition had been found so infallible? But it is one thing superficially to discourse what is impossible should be otherwise, and another to consider what really hath been in the world. Doth not the constant experience of all times prove that where any *history* hath not been timely recorded, it hath been soon corrupted by notorious falsities, or obscured by fabulous reports? As we see among our selves what difference there is in point of certainty between the several stories of K. *Arthur* and *William* the *Conqueror*; what will Mr. *S.* say, that these who lived in K. *Arthurs* time could not know what he did; or that they conspired to deceive their posterity? But if tra-

dition be so *infallible*, why have we not the ancient story of *Britain* as exact as the modern? If Mr. *S.* will impute it to the *peoples ignorance*, *want of letters*, *frequent conquests* by other Nations, and *succeeding barbarism*, he may easily find how many wayes there are for *matters of fact* to be soon lost or corrupted, when they have not been diligently preserved by authentick records; and that without one age conspiring to deceive another. But notwithstanding Mr. *S*'s. confidence, I cannot think it possible for Mr. *S.* to believe that we should have had as true an account of *Alexanders conquest of Asia*, if *Arrian*, *Curtius*, or *Plutarch* had never writ his story, as we have now. Yet this he must assert by vertue of his principles. And he that can believe that, I wonder he should scruple believing the *Popes infallibility*; for certainly no principle of the *Jesuites* is more wild and absurd then this is. Besides, I admire how it came into Mr. *S*'s. head to think, no error could come into history *unless one age conspired to deceive another*, when we find no age agreed in the present mat-

matters of *fact* which are done in it, as to the grounds and particulars of them. To give Mr. *S.* an inſtance home to his purpoſe, in the late *Council* of *Trent*; we ſee already what different repreſentations there are made of it in ſo little a time as hath already paſſed ſince the ſitting of it. One, though he had all the advantages imaginable of knowing all proceedings in it, living at the ſame time, converſing with the perſons preſent at it, having the *memoires* and records of the *Secretaries* themſelves, yet his ſtory is ſince endeavoured to be blaſted by a great perſon of the *Roman Church* as fictitious and partial. We ſee then it is at leaſt ſuppoſed that intereſt and prejudice may have a great hand in abuſing the world in matter of ſtory, though one age never agree to deceive another. And inſtead of being perſwaded by Mr. *S*'s. demonſtrations, I am ſtill of the mind, that we have no ſufficient ſecurity of the truth of any ſtory, which was not written while thoſe perſons were in being who were able to contradict the errors of it. However I deny not but ſome notorious

matters of fact, such as *Alexanders* bare *conqueſt* of *Aſia*, might by the viſible effects of it be preſerved both in *Aſia* and *Greece* for a long time. But if we come to enquire particularly whether this or that was done by him in his conqueſt, which is alone pertinent to our purpoſe, we have no ſecurity at all from tradition, but only from the moſt authentick records of that ſtory. And by this, I hope Mr. *S.* will have cauſe to thank me for *unblundering his thoughts* (his own civil expreſſion) and ſhewing him how errors may come into a ſtory without one age conſpiring to deceive the next; and what a vaſt difference there is between preſerving a bare matter of fact, and all the particulars relating to it. And hereby he may eaſily ſee how far the obligation extends in believing the report of former ages. For there can be no obligation to believe any further then there is evidence of truth in the matter we are obliged to. If then there be not only a poſſibility but a very great probability of miſtakes and errors in matters of fact, I pray what obligation doth there lye upon men abſolutely

lutely to believe what is delivered by the preceding age? But to put an iſſue to this controverſie, let Mr. *S.* examine himſelf, and try if he can name one ſtory that was never written, which was ever certainly popagated from one age to another by meer oral tradition; and if he cannot, he may thereby ſee how little real force his argument hath in the world. For all the force of tradition lies in an unqueſtionable conveyance of thoſe *books*, which contain in them the true reports of the actions of the times they were written in. But can Mr. *S.* think, that if the *Roman hiſtory* had never been written, it had been poſſible for us to have known what was done under the *Kings* and *Conſuls* as now we do? yet if his principle holds, this neceſſarily follows; for *thoſe of that age could not but know them*, and *no age ſince could conſpire to deceive the next*. And from hence, the moſt uſeful conſequence of all is that Mr. *S.* might have writ a hiſtory from the beginning of the world to this day, with a full relation of all *particulars*, if there had never been any *book* written in the world before.

fore. And doth not Mr. *S.* deserve immortal credit for so rare an invention as this is, and all built on nothing short of *demonstrations*?

§. 15. p. 224. But Mr. *S.* very prudently *foresees*, *what it is I must be forced to recurre to*, viz. *that being baffled with his former demonstration, I have no other shift to betake my self to, but to say the case is different between histories and points of faith.* And therefore to bring his business home, he applyes it at large to the delivery of the *Christian faith*, which that he might do in more ample sort, he very finely descants on the old *Verse*, *Quis, quid, ubi*, &c. containing the circumstances of human actions, and from every one of them derives arguments for the *infallibility* of *oral tradition*: which briefly and in plain *English* may be summed up thus; *Since the author of this doctrine was the son of God, the doctrine it self so excellent, and delivered in so publick a manner, in the most convincing way by miracles and good living, and for so good an end as to save mens souls, and that by writing it in mens hearts and testified*

to

to others; and all this at a time when men might judge of the miracles and motives for believing it; therefore since in all these respects it was incomparably beyond the story of Alexanders *conquests, it follows that in a manner infinitely greater must the obligation be to believe Christs doctrine, than* Alexanders *or* William *the Conquerours victories, or any history of the like nature whatsoever.* All which I freely grant, but cannot yet see how from thence it follows that *oral tradition is the only rule of faith*, or the means whereby we are to judge what is the *doctrine* of *Christ*, and what not. Those arguments I confess prove that the *Christians* of the first age were highly concerned to enquire into the truth of these things, and that they had the greatest reason imaginable to believe them; and that it is not possible to conceive that they should not endeavour to propagate so excellent a doctrine and of so high concernment to the world. But the question is, whether abstractly from the *books* written in the first age of the *Christian Church*, there is so much infallibility in the *oral tradition* of every age,

age, that nothing could be embraced for Christs doctrine which was not: and consequently whether every age were bound to believe absolutely what was delivered it by the precedent for the doctrine of *Christ?* Mr. *S.* therefore puts himself to a needless task of proving that every age was bound to believe the *doctrine of Christ*, which I never questioned; but the dispute is, whether every age be bound on the account of *oral tradition* to believe what is delivered by the precedent for *Christs doctrine*. But it is to be observed all along how carefully Mr. *S.* avoids mentioning the *written books* of the *New Testament*; because he knew all his game about oral tradition would be quite spoiled by a true stating the matter of fact in the first ages of the *Christian Church*. I hope he will not be angry with me, for asking him that question about the *Scripture*, which he asks me about the *Council* of *Trent*; *did he never hear of such a thing as the Scripture? or is it so hard to find it?* But if he hath heard of it, I intreat him to resolve me these *Questions*.

1. Whether he doth not believe that

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the books of the *New Teſtament* were written at ſuch a time, when the matters of fact therein recorded, were capable of being throughly examined? which he cannot deny upon his own principle; for tradition being then infallible as to the *doctrine* of *Chriſt*, the writers of theſe books cannot be conceived to deliver it amiſs, unleſs they reſolved to contradict the preſent tradition of the *Church*, which if they had done, thoſe books could never have found any reception among *Chriſtians*. If tradition then convey the doctrine of Chriſt infallibly, theſe books muſt convey it infallibly, becauſe they contain in them the infallible tradition of the firſt age of the *Chriſtian Church*: and were written at that time when many perſons living had been able to diſprove any thing contained therein repugnant to truth. And that theſe books were written by thoſe perſons whoſe names they bear, I appeal to Mr. *S*'s. own rule, *Tradition*; for if that be infallible in any thing, it muſt be in this; and if one age could conſpire to deceive another in a matter of ſuch concernment, what

what ſecurity can be had, that it may not do ſo in all other things? 2. Whether he believes that thoſe whoſe intention was to write an account of the life, actions and doctrine of *Chriſt*, did leave any thing out of their books which did relate to them as of concernment for us to believe? For upon Mr. *S*'s principles, any one may eaſily know what the tradition of the *Church* is; and eſpecially ſuch certainly who were either preſent themſelves at the matters of fact, or heard them from thoſe who were; and what ſatisfaction can any one deſire greater than this? But the queſtion is, whether this teſtimony were not more ſafely depoſited in the *Church* to be conveyed by word of mouth, then it could be by being committed to writing by ſuch who were eye and ear-witneſſes of the actions and doctrine of Chriſt? Upon which I advance ſome further *Queries*. 3. If oral Tradition were the more certain way, why was any thing written at all? it may be Mr. *S*. will tell us, *for moral inſtructions, and to give precepts of good life*; but then why may not theſe be as infallibly con-

conveyed by tradition as doctrines of faith? And why then were any matters of fact and points of faith inserted in the books of the *New Testament?* by which it certainly appears that the intention of writing them was to preserve them to posterity. Let Mr. *S.* tell me whether it was consistent with the wisdom of men, much less with the wisdom of an *Infinite Being* to imploy men to do that, which might be far better done another way, and when it is done can give no satisfaction to the minds of men? 4. Whether those things which are capable of being understood when they are spoken, cease to be so when they are written? For Mr. *S.* seems to understand those terms of a *living voice*, and *dead letters* in a very strict and rigorous manner; as though the sense were only *quick* when spoken, and became buried in *dead letters*. But Mr. *S.* seems with the sagacious *Indian* to admire how it is possible for *dead letters* and *unsenc'd characters* to express mens meanings as well as words. It cannot enter into Mr. *S*'s. apprehension how 24. letters by their various disposition can express mat-

matters of faith? And yet to increas the wonder, he writes about matter of faith, while he is proving that mat ters of faith cannot be conveyed b writing. So that Mr. *S*'s. own writin is the beſt demonſtration againſt him ſelf; and he confutes his own *Sophiſtr* with his fingers, as *Diogenes* did *Zeno* by his motion. For doth Mr. *S*. hop to perſwade men that tradition is rule of faith by his book or not? i not, to what purpoſe doth he write if he doth, then it is to be hoped ſom matters of faith may be intelligibly con veyed by writing; Eſpecially if Mr. *S*. doth it; but by no means we are t believe that ever the *Spirit* of *God* ca do it. For whatever is written by me aſſiſted by that, is according to him bu a heap of *dead letters*, and *inſignifican characters*; when Mr. *S*. the mean while is full of *ſenſe* and *demonſtration*. Happy man that can thus out-do infi nite wiſdom, and write far beyond ei ther *Prophets* or *Apoſtles!* But if he will condeſcend ſo far as to allow that to inſpired perſons which he confident ly believes of himſelf, *viz.* that he can write a book full of *ſenſe*, and that

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any ordinary capacity may apprehend the design of it, our controversie is at an end. For then matters of faith may be intelligibly and certainly conveyed to posterity by the books of *Scripture*; and if so, there will be no need of any recourse to *oral Tradition*. 5. If the books of *Scripture* did not certainly and intelligibly convey all matters of faith, what made them be received with so much veneration in the first ages of the *Christian Church*? which were best able to judge of the truth of the matters contained in them, and the usefulness of the books themselves. And therein we still find that appeals were made to them, that they thought themselves concerned to vindicate them against all objections of Heathens and others; and the resolution of faith was made into them, and not tradition, as I have already manifested, and must not repeat. 6. Whether it be in the least credible, since the books of *Scripture* were supposed to contain the doctrines of faith, that every age of the Church should look on it self as obliged absolutely to believe the doctrine of the precedent by vertue of an oral tradition? For since they re- *Part.* 1. *chap.* 5.

ſolved their faith into the written books, how is it poſſible they ſhould believe on the account of an oral tradition? Although then the *Apoſtles* did deliver the doctrine of Chriſt to all their diſciples; yet ſince the records of it were embraced in the Church, men judged of the truth or falſehood of doctrines, by the conveniency or repugnancy of them to what was contained in thoſe books. By which we underſtand that the obligation to believe what was taught by the precedent age, did not ariſe from the oral tradition of it, but by the ſatisfaction of the preſent age, that the doctrine delivered by it was the ſame with that contained in *Scripture.*

§. 16. p. 229. &c. It is time now to return to Mr. *S.* who proceeds ſtill to manifeſt *this obligation in poſterity to believe what was delivered as matter of faith, by the precedent age of the Church*; but the force of all is the ſame ſtill; viz. *that otherwiſe one age muſt conſpire to deceive the next.* But the inconſequence of that, I have fully ſhewed already, unleſs he demonſtrates it impoſſible for errors to come

come in any other way: For if we reduce the ſubſtance of what he ſaith to a Syllogiſtical form, it comes to this; Where there is no poſſibility of error, there is an abſolute obligation to faith; but there is no poſſibility of error in the tradition of any age of the *Church*. *Ergo* in every age there is an abſolute obligation to believe the tradition of the preſent *Church*. The *minor* he thus proves. If no age of the *Church* can be ignorant of what the precedent taught, or conſpire to deceive the next, then there is no poſſibility of error coming into the tradition of the *Church* in any age; but the antecedent is true, and therefore the conſequent. Now who ſees not that the force of all this, lyes not in proving the *minor propoſition*, or that no age could conſpire to deceive another? but the conſequence, *viz.* that no error can come into a *Church*, but by a general miſtake in one whole age, or the general impoſture of it, which we utterly deny: and have ſhewed him already the falſneſs of it from his own conceſſions. And I might more largely ſhew it from thoſe do-

ctrines or opinions which they themſelves acknowledge to have come into their Church without any ſuch general miſtake or impoſture, as the *doctrines* of *Papal Infallibility*, and the common belief of *Purgatory*. The very ſame way that Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* will ſhew us how theſe came in, we will ſhew him how many others came in as erroneous and ſcandalous as thoſe are. For whether *they* account theſe matters of faith or no, it is certain many among them do, and that the far greateſt number, who aſſert and believe them to be the doctrine of their *Church* too. If therefore theſe might come in without one age miſtaking or deceiving the next, why might not all thoſe come in the ſame way which we charge upon them as the errors of their *Church?* And in the ſame manner that corrupt doctrines come in, may corrupt practiſes too, ſince *theſe*, as he ſaith, *ſpring from the other*. He might therefore have ſaved himſelf the trouble of finding *out how an acute Wit, or great Scholar would diſcover the weakneſs of this way*. For without pretending to be either of theſe, I have

p. 231.

found

found out another way of attaquing it, then Mr. *S.* looked for: *viz.* from his own principles and conceſſions; ſhewing how errors might come into a Church, without a total deception or conſpiracy in any one age. Which if it be true, he cannot bind me to believe what ever he tells me the preſent Church delivers, unleſs he can prove that this never came into the Church as a ſpeculation or private opinion, and from thence by degrees hath come to be accounted a point of faith. Therefore his way of proof is now quite altered, and he cannot ſay we are bound to believe whatever the preſent Church delivers; for that which he calls the preſent Church, may have admitted ſpeculations and private opinions into doctrines of faith; but he muſt firſt prove ſuch doctrines delivered by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, and that from his time down to our age they have been received by the whole Church for matters of faith; and when he hath done this, as to any of the points in controverſie between us, I will promiſe him to be his *Proſelyte*. But he ought ſtill to remember that he

is not to prove it impoſſible for one whole age to conſpire to deceive the next; but that ſuppoſing that, it is impoſſible for any errors to come into the tradition of the Church. Let us now ſee what Mr. *S.* objects againſt thoſe words I then uſed, againſt the demonſtrating this way; *It is hard to conceive what reaſon ſhould inforce it but ſuch as proves the impoſſibility of the contrary; and they have underſtandings of another mould from others who can conceive it impoſſible men ſhould not think themſelves obliged to believe and do all juſt as their predeceſſors.* And
p. 234. whatever Mr. *S.* ſayes to the contrary, I cannot yet ſee, but that therein I argued *from the very nature and conſtitution of the thing.* For that which I looked for, was a *demonſtration*, which I ſuppoſed could not be unleſs the impoſſibility of the contrary were demonſtrated. But if it be poſſible, for men, *Chriſtians*, nay *Romaniſts* to believe on other accounts then the tradition of the precedent age, I pray what demonſtration can there be, that men muſt think themſelves obliged to believe and do all juſt as their predeceſ-

ſors

ſors did? Surely if Mr. S's. fancy had not been very extravagant, he could never have thought here of *mens being obliged to cut their Beards, or wear ſuch Garters and Hat-bands as their fore-fathers did.* For do I not mention *believing firſt and then doing?* by which it were eaſie to apprehend, that I meant matters of faith, and ſuch practiſes as flow from them. Neither was there any ſuch *crafty and ſophiſtical dealing* as he charges me with; for I am content his doctrine be taken in his own terms; and I have now given a larger and fuller account why I am far from being convinced by the way he hath uſed for reſolving faith. Paſſing by therefore his challenge, which I accept of, as long as he holds to the *weapon* of *reaſon* and *civility*, I come to conſider his laſt enquiry, *why I ſhould come to doubt of ſuch an obligation in poſterity to believe their anceſtors in matters of faith*; and he judiciouſly reſolves it into *a ſtrange diſtortion of human nature*, but ſuch as it ſeems, is the proper effect of the *Proteſtant's temper, which is*, ſaith he, *to chuſe every one his faith, by his private judgement or wit* p. 235. p. 236. p. 237.

working upon diſputable words. Which as far as we own it, is, not to believe what we ſee no ground for; and if this be ſuch a *diſtortion of humane nature*, I envy not Mr. *S*'s. uprightneſs and perfection. If he means that we build our faith on our private judgements in oppoſition to *Scripture* or the *Univerſal Tradition* of the *Church* in all ages, let him prove it evidently in one particular, and I engage for my ſelf and all true *Proteſtants*, we will renounce the belief of it. If he hath any thing further to object againſt the Grounds of our Religion, he knows where to attaque me; let him undertake the whole; or elſe acknowledge it a moſt unreaſonable thing thus to charge falſities upon us, and then ſay we have nothing elſe to ſay for our ſelves. We pretend not to chuſe our faith, but heartily embrace whatever appears to have been delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*; but we know the *Church* of *Rome* too well to believe all which ſhe would impoſe upon us, and are loth to have her chuſe our Religion for us, ſince we know ſhe hath choſen ſo ill for her ſelf. But if Mr. *S.* will

will not believe me in saying thus, what reason have I to believe him in saying otherwise? such general charges then signifie nothing, but every one must judge according to the reason on both sides.

I now come to the last part of my task; which is to shew, *that this way is repugnant to common sense and experience, and that the Church of* Rome *hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former ages.* To which purpose my words are: *It is to no purpose to prove the impossibility of motion when I see men move; no more is it to prove that no age of the Church could vary from the preceding, when we can evidently prove that they have done it. And therefore this argument is intended only to catch easie minds that care not for a search into the history of the several ages of the Church, but had rather sit down with a superficial subtilty, then spend time in further enquiries.* But *two things* Mr. *S.* tells me, *are required ere I can see that their faith varies from the former. First to see what their Church holds now, and then to see what* §. 17. p. 238.

what the former Church held before; and he kindly tells me, if he ſees any thing, I ſee neither well. It ſeems I want Mr. *S*'s. *ſpectacles* of oral tradition to ſee with; but as yet I have no cauſe to complain of the want of them, but I ſee much better without them, than with them. He tells me, *I cannot ſee what their preſent Church holds, and therefore I cannot aſſure any what was held before; becauſe if I renounce tradition I take away all means of knowing. The reaſon why I cannot candidly ſee* (as he phraſes it) *what their Church holds now, is, becauſe I cannot diſtinguiſh between faith and its explication, ſome Schoolmen and the Church.* By which it ſeems it is impoſſible for me to know what their Church holds concerning *Invocation of Saints, Worſhip of Images, Communion in one kind*; for thoſe are the points I there mention, wherein it is evident that the *Church of Rome* hath receded from the doctrine and practiſe of the Primitive Church. Or are theſe only the opinions and practiſes of ſome *Schoolmen* among them, and not the doctrine and practiſe of their *Church?* But that we

might

might come to ſome fuller ſtate of theſe controverſies, I wiſh M. *S.* would ſettle ſome ſure way whereby we might know diſtinctly what are the doctrines and practiſes of their Church. If the *Council* of *Trent* and *Roman Catechiſm*, be ſaid to be the rule of *doctrine*, I deſire no other; ſo that thoſe may be interpreted by practiſes univerſally allowed among them. As when that *Council* only defined that *due honour be given to Saints*, the general practiſe of that *Church* may tell us what they mean by that *due honour*; and if that be not fair, I know not what is. But I ſee all the ſhift Mr. *S.* hath, is, when he is pinched, to ſay *thoſe are the opinions of Schoolmen and private ſpeculators, and not the doctrine of their Church.* And if ſuch ſhifts as theſe are, muſt ſerve the turn, I ſhould wonder if ever he be to ſeek for an anſwer. But the ſhorteſt anſwer of all would be that none but thoſe of their Church can know what ſhe holds; and therefore it is to no purpoſe for *Proteſtants* to write againſt her: or it may be, that none but Mr. *S.* and one or two more can tell; for many among them ſay, thoſe

those are the doctrines of their *Church* which they deny to be. So that except Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* and some very few *demonstrators* more, all the rest are *Schoolmen*, *private opinators*, and not to be relyed on. *But I cannot* p. 239. *see what their Church held formerly neither.* No wonder at all of that; for if I cannot see an object so near me as the present *Church*, how can it be expected I should see one so much further off as the doctrine of former ages? And his reason is so strong as may well perswade me out of one at least of my five senses. *For*, saith he, *if I question tradition, I question whether there be any doctrine delivered, and so any Fathers.* And is not this argued like a Demonstrator? First he supposes there never was any way used in the world but oral tradition, and then strongly infers, if I deny that, I can know nothing. But I can yet hardly perswade my self that the *Fathers* only sate in Chimney corners teaching their Children by word of mouth, and charging them to be sure to do so to theirs; but as they loved preserving the doctrine of faith, they should have a great care

are never to write down a word of it. But why I wonder, should Mr. *S.* think that if I do not allow of oral tradition, I must needs question whether there were any *Fathers*? I had thought I might have known there had been *Fathers* by their *Children*; I mean the *Books* they left behind them. But if all Mr. *S.* pleads for be only this, that no *books* can be certainly conveyed without tradition, he disputes without an adversary; but as I never oppose this, so I am sure it doth him little service. It is then from the books of the *Fathers* that I find what the sense of the *Church* of their age was, and from thence I have shewed how vastly different the opinions and practises of the *Roman Church* are from those of the *Primitive*. Although then I may not think my self obliged to believe all that the present *Church* delivers for matter of faith; yet I hope I may find what the opinions and practise of the former *Church* were by the records that are left of it; And the reason why I cannot think any one obliged to believe what every age of the *Church* delivers, is, because I think no man

man obliged to believe contradicti-
ons; and I ſee the opinions and practi-
ſes of ſeveral ages apparently contrary
to each other.

§. 18. Well, but I call this way a *ſuperficial ſubtilty*: and ſo I think it ſtill; ſo little have Mr. *S*'s. demonſtration wrought upon me. *But*, ſaith he, *is that which is wholly built on the nature of things ſuperficial?* No; but that which pretends to be ſo built, may. And of that nature I have ſhewed this way to be, and not the former. But that I may not think him *ſuperficial* as well as his way, he puts a profound Queſtion to me, *What do I think Controverſie is?* and that he may the better let me know what it is, he anſwers himſelf. *I deal plainly with you*, ſaith he; *you may take it to be an art of talking, and I think you do ſo, though you will not profeſs it; but I take it to be a noble ſcience.* But to let him ſee that I will deal as plainly with him, as he doth with me, I will *profeſs* it, that I not only think *Controverſie* as uſually managed, but ſome mens way of demonſtrating (Mr. *S.* may eaſily know who

whom I mean) to be a meer *art of talking*, and nothing else. But *he takes it to be a noble science*: yes doubtless, if Mr. *S.* manage it, and he be the judge of it himself. His meaning I suppose is, by his following words, *that he goes upon certain principles, and we do not.* p. 240. We have already seen how certain his principles have been, and I should be somewhat ashamed of my *religion* if I had no better. But what our *rule* of *faith* is, hath been so amply discoursed already by you, and that in Mr. *S*'s. *clearing method*, that nothing is left for me to do, but to touch at what remains, and concludes this answer. I had the better to illustrate the weakness of that argument from *oral tradition*, brought an instance in that case parallel, *viz.* that if one ages delivering to another would prove that the faith of Christ was in every age unalterable, because no age did testifie any such alteration to be in it; by the same argument the world might be proved eternal, because no age did ever testifie to another, that the world was ever otherwise then it is. So that if oral tradition were only to be re-

lied

lied on, there could be no evidence given of the worlds being ever otherwise then it is, and consequently the world must be believed to have been alwayes what we see it is. This as far as I can apprehend, is a clear and distinct ratiocination, and purposely designed to prove that we must admit of other rules to judge of alterations in the *Church* by besides oral tradition. But Mr. *S.* (in his own expression) *strangely roving from the mark* I aimed at, professes *there is not a tittle in it parallel to his* medium, *nay that he never saw in his life more absurdities couched in fewer words.* But I must take all patiently from a man *who still perches on the specifical nature of things and never flags below the sphere of science.* Yet by his good leave, he either apprehends not, or wilfully mistakes my meaning: for my argument doth not proceed upon the belief of the world's eternity, which in his answer he runs wholly upon as far as *eighthly and lastly* but upon the evidence of oral tradition as to no discernable alteration in any age of it. For the Question between us is, whether in matters of alteration in the

p. 241.

p. 242.

the fact or practice of the Church we are bound to rely only on the teſtimony of oral tradition; ſo that if no age can be inſtanced in wherein any alteration was made, and this delivered by that age, then we are bound to believe there hath been no alteration ſince *Chriſt* and the *Apoſtles* times: now I ſay, if this hold good, I will prove the world eternal by the ſame argument; taking this for our principle, that we are bound to rely only on oral tradition in the caſe, originally derived from the matter of fact ſeen by thoſe of the firſt age; for that which never was otherwiſe then it is, is eternal; but we cannot know by oral tradition that the world ever was otherwiſe then it is: for no age of the world can be inſtanced in, wherein we have any teſtimony of any alteration that was in it. Either then we muſt believe that the world ever was what it is, *i. e.* Eternal; or elſe we muſt ſay, that we are not to rely barely on oral tradition in this caſe, but we muſt judge whether the world were made or no, by other *mediums* of Scripture and reaſon. And

this was all which I aimed at, *viz.* to ſhew that where there is no evidence from oral tradition, yet if there be *Scripture* and *reaſon*, there is ſufficient ground for our faith to ſtand upon. And ſo I apply it to the preſent caſe; though we could not prove barely from the *tradition* of any one age that there had been any alteration in the faith or practice of the *Church*; yet if I can prove that there hath been ſuch from *Scripture* and *reaſon*, this is ſufficient for me to believe it. And now I dare appeal to the indifferent Reader, whether this be ſo *full of abſurdities*, or it be ſuch a *rambling Chimerical argument* (as he calls it) *no two pieces* p. 243. *which hang together with themſelves or any thing elſe.* Which being expreſſions of as great modeſty as ſcience I am content Mr. *S.* ſhould bear away the honour of them and his demonſtrations together.

The laſt thing he quarrels with §. 19. me for, is, that I ſay, *if we can evidently prove that there have been alterations in the Church, then it is to*

purpoſe

purpose to prove that impossible which we see actually done. And this appears not only, because the Scripture supposes a degeneracy in the Christian Church, which could never be, if every age of the Church did infallibly believe and practise as the precedent up to Christs time did: but because we can produce clear evidence that some things are delivered by the present Church which must be brought in by some age since the time of Christ. For which I refer the Reader to what I had said about communion in one kind, Invocation of Saints, and worship of Images: In all which, I say, *I had proved evidently that they were not in use in some ages of the Christian Church; and it is as evident that these are delivered by the present Church, and therefore this principle must needs be false.* In answer to this, Mr. *S.* wishes, *I would tell him first what evidence means, whether a strong fancy or a demonstration?* I mean that which is enough to perswade a wise man who judges according to the clearest reason, which I am sure is more then ever his demonstrations will do. But it is a pleasant specta-

cle to see how Mr. *S.* layes about him at my saying that the *Scripture* supposes a degeneracy in the Christian Church. *Incomparably argued!* saith he; *why, see we not the place? does it evidently speak of faith or manners, the Universal Church or particular persons? but be it in faith, be it universal, does it suppose this degeneracy already past, which is only proper to your purpose, or yet to come? That is, does it say there must be a total Apostacy in faith before the year* 1664.? *Alas he had forgot this.* Most incomparably answered! For if the degeneracy be in 1665. or any years after, what becomes of M. *S*'s. demonstration then, that no errors could come into the Church? but it seems his demonstration holds but till 1664. and I easily believe an other year will never believe the truth of it. But if such a thing as a degeneracy be possible, how then stands the infallibility of tradition? when there can be no degeneracy without falling from the doctrine and practices of *Christ* and his *Apostles*. But that such a degeneracy hath already been in that which calls it self the *Catholick Church*, and

and that both in faith and manners, I ſhall referr Mr. *S.* to the learned Author of the late *Idea of Antichriſtianiſm*, and *Synopſis Prophetica*, where he may find enough to perſwade him that his demonſtration was far from holding ſo long as 1664. And now I leave the Reader to judge whether the foregoing evidences againſt the infallibility of *oral tradition*, or Mr. *S*'s. demonſtrations have the greater force of reaſon in them. And if he will not *ſtoop* ſo far from the *height* of his *perch* as to take notice of what I have elſewhere ſaid, I am reſolved to let him ſee I am not at all concerned about it: I begin to underſtand him ſo well by this *Appendix*, that I can give my ſelf a reaſonable account why he thought it not fit to meddle with any other part of my book. But if Mr. *S.* be reſolved not to anſwer any of the teſtimonies I there produce, unleſs *I ſingle them out and print them at the end of this Anſwer*, (*i. e.* remove them from that evidence which attends them in the *ſeries* of the diſcourſe) I can only ſay, he is the moſt imperious anſwerer I have met with, who is re- p. 244.

ſolved never to deal with an adverſary, but on his own unreaſonable terms. Thus, heartily wiſhing Mr. *S*'s. Science as great as his opinion of it, and a good effect of our endeavours to promote the one, by removing the other, I am

Sir,
Your affectionate friend
and ſervant,

London. June 28.
1665.

Edward Stillingfleet.

FINIS.

Poſtſcript.

SIR,

SInce the diſpatch of the former Papers, I have met with another Treatiſe, wherein I find my ſelf concerned, written by the author of *Fiat Lux*, the Title whereof is *Diaphanta*: I am afraid the Title affrights you; for I aſſure you it is the moſt formidable thing in his whole Book. But the man is a very modeſt man and hugely different from Mr. S's. humor; for he is ſo far from offering to demonſtrate

strate the grounds of faith; that all he pretends to in the title of his book, is *to excuse Catholick Religion against the opposition of several Adversaries*. What fault I pray hath the *Catholick Religion* committed, that it must now come to be *excused* instead of being *defended*? But when I look into that part which concerns my self, I presently understand the meaning of it, which is not *to excuse Catholick Religion*, but *themselves*, for not being able to *defend* it. For he very ingenuously tells
p. 210. us, *that faith is firm and constant, though all his talk for it be miserably weak: i. e.* he is sure they have an excellent Religion, though he knows not what to say for it; and their faith is a very good faith, but it hath not yet had the good fortune to be understood by them. For he acknow-
p. 209. ledges, that *as often as they dispute, they are beyond the business*, (so may any one believe, who reads their late books,) which is in effect to say, there is no way left of disputing any longer with adversaries about their faith; only they must believe it stoutly themselves;

ſelves; but it is to no purpoſe to offer to defend it. Nay, it doth their faith a great deal of miſchief; *for*, ſaith he, *in reading controverſies we ſee not ſo much the nature of the faith, as the wit of him who oppoſes or defends it.* From whence we may eaſily gather what unſpeakable miſchief they do their cauſe by writing for it. By which expreſſions we may gueſs, at what a low ebbe the defence of their faith is among them: for the way now taken to defend it, is by diſowning the defenders of it, and by ſaying, that they only vent their own opinions; and though we confute them never ſo much, yet their faith holds good ſtill. Was ever a good cauſe driven to ſuch miſerable ſhifts as theſe are, eſpecially among thoſe who pretend to wit and learning? One, he ſaith, *T. C.* vents a private opinion of his own, and it is not a pin matter whether it ſtand or fall; another, he ſaith, the ſame of *I. S.* a third of *J. V. C.* and yet for all this, their religion is very firm and ſure, and they all at perfect agreement about

about it. Is this the *victory over me* Mr. *S.* mentions to be so easie a thing? I see that by the same figure Mr. *S.* calls his way of arguing demonstration, running out of the field shall be accounted conquering. For I never saw any person do it more openly then this author does. For he plainly confesses, *that his Catholick Gentleman went quite besides his business, that he built upon indefensible principles, that his theological ratiocination was indeed pretty, but too weak to hold.* And are not we hugely too blame, if we do not cry up such mighty Conquerors as these are? Truly Sir, I expect the very same answer should be returned to your book; that Mr. *S*'s. argument, *is a pretty theological ratiocination; and that your answer is not unwitty: but though that way will not hold, another will.* Thus when they are beaten off *Infallibility*, they run to *Tradition*: and when they are again beaten off *Tradition*, then back again to *Infallibility*. So that the short of all their answers is, though such a one cannot defend our faith, yet I

can;

an; though I cannot, yet the faith s firm and conſtant ſtill. I wonder what their *Superiors* think of this way of proceeding among them; we hould imagine if they be ſo weak s they ſay themſelves, they had much etter keep them from appearing broad and expoſing their cauſe ſo idiculouſly to contempt. But it may e, they think their *faith* is the bet- er as well as their *devotion*, for their *gnorance*: and that it would be a nighty diſparagement to their cauſe, or ſuch ſilly people to be able to de- end it. It is enough for them to dmire it themſelves, and to ſay as heir common people uſe to do, though hey cannot defend it, yet there are ome that can. And although it nay be no particular perſon can do , yet their cauſe is able to defend ſelf. But for all that I can ſee, by uch kind of anſwers, the intention of hem, is, to intreat us, not to tri- mph over the weakneſs of their pre- nt Writers, but to wait till the *auſe* it ſelf thinks fit to write. And when

when it doth so, they may expect
further answer; but it were a gre
piece of cruelty for us to hasten th
ruine, who fall so fast before us b
each others Pens.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 16. l. 16. for *that*, r. *than*: p. 2
l. 8. for *errors*, r. *concerns*.

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